

**School of Design and Art**

**Shock Advertising – A sensationalised media construct?**

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## Abstract

Shock advertising aims to startle and offend people through its questionable use of images and words. In doing so it breaches moral and ethical values by exploiting consumer anxieties. This technique is used by advertisers 'to cut through the clutter' of today's oversaturated world of communication messages. This is achieved by deliberate use of stimuli intended to shock at least a proportion of the public by norm violation, disregard for tradition, play on stereotypes encompassing transgressions, breaches of moral, ethical or social codes and other issues that outrage the moral or physical sense. However, shock advertising has now become even more shocking and offensive through its presentation that is generally provocative or even exploitative of consumer anxieties. In today's society advertising has a profound impact on how people understand life, the world and themselves, especially in regard to their values, their ways of choosing and behaving.

Research had revealed that there is a mismatch between the literature and the advertising process. The question leading this research is: How does the practice of advertising work in comparison to the theory? By presenting the advertisers point of view, this allowed comparability with general rules of shock advertising and its redefinition. The main focus of this research is on the definition of shock advertising, changes of the consumer perception and effectiveness of the system of self-regulation.

Advertising agencies play a key, but invisible role in the advertising process. To gain an insight into the practices and process of the advertising industry, several companies' representatives were interviewed.

This study makes a contribution to the understanding of shock advertising in a broad and global context, whilst recognising shifts and discrepancies between theory and practice of advertising.

## Disclaimer

To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person, except where due acknowledgement has been made.

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any other university.

I confirm that all work submitted is my own unless where stated otherwise.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Glossary

### *Regulatory:*

AANA	Australian Association of National Advertisers
ASB	Advertising Standards Board
ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
MCA	Media Council of Australia
ASC	Advertising Standards Council
ACB	Advertising Claims Board
ASR	Advertising Self-Regulation
AASC	Australian Advertising Standards Council
AMI	Advanced Medical Institute
ASA	Advertising Standards Authority
CAP	Committee of Advertising Practice
BCAP	Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice
NAD	National Advertising Division (USA)
CBBB	Council of Better Business (USA)
NARD	National Advertising Review Board (USA)
ZAW	Zentralausschuss der Werbewirtschaft (Germany)

### *Marketing/ Advertising*

IMC	Integrated Marketing Communication
IBC	Integrated Brand Communication
PR	Public Relations
COBA	Consumer Orientated Business Advertising
B2B	Business-to-Business Advertising
IAB	Interactive Advertising Bureau
PSA	Public Service Announcement

## *Chapter I*

### **Introduction**

#### **1 The Intention**

The world is increasingly 'cluttered' with media; and we find this media, both old and new, increasingly 'cluttered' with advertising messages. Wherever you live in the world you will be aware of advertising. It is ubiquitous and virtually unavoidable. Advertising is made to be consumed on the run, advertisements piled on top of each other. Advertisements can be compared to background music, in the form of pictures and text that can be heard without listening (Christians, Fackler, McKee, Kreshel, & Robert H. Woods, 2009; Twitchell, 2000).

Shock advertising is very much like story telling, acting as a primary mediator in our lives. It has not only a commercial role but also a social role, telling us a different story every day (Casimir, 2010; "Media Lens, about us," 2008). Sometimes it's the story of an unhappy family that has dirty washing from soccer practice: the family start using a different washing powder which makes all the washing clean and the family happy. Other times it is about a father regretting his decision to smoke; he now has lung cancer with little chance of survival, and is telling his story to convince others not to smoke. There are all sorts of stories all around us everyday - happy, sad, exciting, adventurous, all trying to convince the consumer of a simple thing: buy this product or service, change your habits.

Of course some stories take it a little further than others. Within this saturated media environment, confrontational advertising has developed to be a constant, and there does not appear to be a lot of attention drawn to this anymore. This confrontational advertising is often referred to as shock advertising, and it has often crossed the boundaries of what can be called ethically questionable in the

consumer's mind. This boundary crossing has also raised questions about self-regulation.

The system of self-regulation implemented in Australia is intended to keep advertising "decent and honest". However, with all the controversial advertisements that are being produced, is there a gap in the system? Do advertisements need to be changed by the advertisers to make them socially acceptable? Should the self-regulatory body have more control over this? In order to answer these questions we need to ask what the consumer is doing about unacceptable advertising, what is the effect on the consumer, and do these effects lead to the desensitisation of the consumer? Have consumers seen too many advertising campaigns bordering on ethically unacceptable advertising for them to still be effective? Since the advertisers still need to attract the consumers' attention to sell their product or service, they have often resorted to the use of shock advertising. Consequently, the images used by advertising campaigns have become more graphic and confrontational, to gain attention from the consumer and the media. This again raises the question of self-regulation: is there a need for more? Has a vicious circle been created of self-regulation, consumer desensitisation and shock advertising?

During this research it has become clear that the lack of definition of shock advertising is problematic. What is shock advertising? Should it be called threat appeal, as suggested by the advertising professionals (Fishlock, 2010; Yole, 2010)? The definitions of shock advertising range from causing controversy or provocation to "a sensationalised media construct", threat appeal being the better term. "Shock advertising" as a term seems non-existent. Not only has this research questioned the existence of shock advertising as a term, but the definition has also varied greatly.

Shock advertising's main feature is to create controversy, which can be a wonderful thing, however, in the hand of advertising it is always suspect. There always seems to be an ulterior motive or hidden agenda (Fritzsche, 2005).

In reviewing the concept of a vicious circle and questioning the regulation of shock advertising, a fundamental issue has arisen: the appearance of a gap between the theory and literature of shock advertising and the reality, the actual

practice of shock advertising. There seems to be a mismatch between shock advertising, the consumer and the system of self-regulation.

## 1.1 Aim of Study

The aim of this study is to explore the gaps and discrepancies between the theory and practice of shock advertising. The question leading this research is: how does the practice of shock advertising work in comparison to the theory?

Further, the research intends to emphasise the relevance of the particular, rather than the general, rules of shock advertising by presenting the view of the advertiser. This will allow comparability with the general rules of shock advertising and the redefinition and placement of it within the advertising business.

To accomplish the aim and answer the main research question, the following objectives will assist this study:

- a. How has unsettling advertising developed?
- b. What is shock advertising?
- c. How does the system of self-regulation work?
- d. What is the consumer's response to shock advertising?

These objectives also form the framework of the literature review, as well as creating the foundation for the way the research is conducted, analysed and discussed.

Answering these questions will allow further insight into the practice of shock advertising. They will aid in describing how shock advertising is used and seen by the advertising industry, helping to define shock advertising, but also viewing the bigger picture of the repercussions that shock advertising has on the consumer, the business and self-regulation.

## 1.2 Significance of Study

As advertising has developed into a prominent channel of promoting and selling products and services to consumers, it has gained in prominence in the consumer's everyday life. The consumer is confronted with advertising at all times and thus should take an interest in what is influencing their decision-making. Furthermore, we need to have a certain amount of control in what we expose ourselves to, but more importantly our children. Whilst there are rules and regulations in place for all sorts of advertising for children and advertising on television, a large amount of confrontational, sexual or provocative advertising does not seem to be regulated effectively. Therefore, it is important to recognise advertising exposure and its regulation, and create further understanding of this issue.

Advertising has been described as representing culture, forming fashion trends and being a display of society and its development. Shock advertising is known to question, offend or violate society and cultural values and qualities. It is not only important for the consumer to understand this, but also to be aware of the environment that they live in.

This research will be conducted from the point of view of the practitioner, the advertiser. It is evident from the literature that there is a clear lack of research about what advertising practitioners do, and why they take certain approaches with advertising. To understand shock advertising, not only as a strategy but also in combination with marketing and brand communication and what it means within the industry, it is important to understand the advertisers' point of view. This research provides original contributions on this topic, giving new insights and closing gaps through answering a number of crucial questions.

While a large amount of research has been conducted about consumers' reactions, behaviour, psychology and emotion in regards to advertising, by showing the point of view of the advertiser, comparisons can be made and possible differences explored. Furthermore, the development of a discourse about shock advertising and how it fits into marketing strategy will provide fresh information important to the advertising industry.

### 1.3 Thesis Outline

Chapter I introduces the topic and sets out the aims and objectives of the research.

Chapter II Painting the Picture will provide background information and discussions based on the literature review. It will establish basic knowledge about advertising practice and especially define shock advertising from a theoretical point of view. [This basic knowledge will be important to understand the analysis and discussion in Chapter V]. It will also place shock advertising in context with marketing communication and brand communication. Chapter II will show the complexity of shock advertising and its relationship with the advertising industry. From the literature review, working definitions will be developed, allowing the definition of key words and revealing gaps and discrepancies in the literature.

Chapter III will give information on the research methods and procedures used to plan and implement the research. In Chapter IV the samples and case studies will be introduced to outline the history and development of shock advertising. It will outline information on the samples and interviewees to describe their professional backgrounds. Additionally, it will establish credibility and reliability.

Chapter V will analyse and discuss the findings from the research conducted. This includes a visual analysis of the case studies, and further discussion points on the consumer perspective and the advertising professionals' viewpoints within the literature. The discussion will be organised thematically, contributing to the discourse of shock advertising and the research objectives. Comparisons between the research and the literature will be made, offering additional points for discussion.

Chapter VI will discuss the implications of the research findings and their relationship to the existing literature and theory. This chapter will consider how the conclusions drawn can impact advertising practice and the future development of shock advertising. Additionally, the conclusion will consider opportunities for the advertising industry and theorists.

## 1.4 Working Definitions

Words can have different meanings depending on their context within text and the social and cultural environment of the interpreter. To avoid confusion and double meaning the most important terms within this thesis are described here, as a reference for understanding.

These working definitions will be based on a combination of dictionary definitions and definitions from the literature review, with the exception of social advertising, which will be explained from the advertisers' point of view based on the interviews conducted. This is due to a lack of definition within the literature, which will be explained further within social advertising definition and the discussion chapter.

The definitions were achieved through a thorough and in-depth literature review, and the collection of definitions and opinions. This combination allowed the creation of working definitions.

### 1.4.1. Advertising

The Oxford dictionary (B. Moore, 2004) describes advertising as the practice of influencing people through public media in order to promote sales of products and services or promote political or other messages.

Further literature on advertising describes advertising as a paid mass-mediated attempt to persuade the consumer. It is a complex form of communication operating with objectives and strategies leading to various types of impact and thoughts on the consumer by a company or organisation that wants its information spread. The person who pays for the advertising is called the client (Fritzsche, 2005; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2003).

### **1.4.2. Shock advertising**

The initial working definition of shock advertising is of an approach that is revolutionary because it turns the fundamental principles of the system upside down (Kultur, 2008). Dzamic (November 2006) further explains shock advertising as a way to challenge taboos to achieve reactions of astonishment and disgust using the most controversial images.

The term “shock” has the meaning of a sudden and disturbing effect on the emotions or physical reactions as described by the Oxford dictionary (B. Moore, 2004). This, together with the definition of advertising - a paid way of communicating messages to persuade the consumer to buy a product or service - describes shock advertising in a way that is most appropriate in the context of the advertisements that have been complained about. Shock advertising is also described as a way to break through the clutter of advertising. The break through relates to the old idea of the penetration of an enemy's defensive position or line in depth and strength (B. Moore, 2004). Within the context of this thesis this can be transferred to tearing down the defences of the audience. Advertising is breaking through the clutter to help the audience receive the message.

However, there is no universal definition of shock advertising, which will be described and discussed within the research findings.

### **1.4.3. Advertising Campaign**

An advertising campaign is a series of coordinated advertisements that communicate a reasonably cohesive and integrated theme about a product, service or brand. The theme may be made up of several claims or points but should advance an essentially singular theme. Successful advertising campaigns can be developed around a single advertisement placed in multiple media, or they can be made up of several different advertisements with a singular look, feel and message.

Advertising campaigns can run for a few weeks to several years. The advertising campaign requires a keen sense of the complex environments within which a company must communicate to different audiences (Blech, Blech, Kerr, & Powel, 2009; O'Guinn, Allen, & Semenik, 2009).



#### **1.4.4. Marketing**

Marketing has a very clear and precise definition, which is consistent throughout the literature review. It is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy and benefit individual consumers and organisational objectives (Blech et al., 2009; B. Moore, 2004; O'Guinn et al., 2009).

#### **1.4.5. Brand**

Brand is defined as a particular make of goods, an identifying trademark or label and can be of a special or characteristic kind (B. Moore, 2004).

Additionally O'Guinn, et al. (2009) describes that "brand" is a name, term, sign, symbol or any other feature that identifies one sellers' goods or service as distinct from those of other sellers. It is generally used to signify or identify the manufacturer or seller of a product or service (Schultz & Barnes, 1999). Brand provides differentiation from competitors and ownership protection within the marketplace. However, in Schultz's (1999) opinion a brand is much more in the 21st century than just a name, term, sign or symbol. He argues that the brand has become part of the relationship between the marketing organisation and the consumer. The brand represents the bond between the buyer and the seller, bringing marketplace meaning to the consumer. "It represents what the consumer is and what he or she believes the brand provides to help reinforce his or her place in society. ... It is a relationship that only the consumer can create" (Schultz & Barnes, 1999).

#### **1.4.6. Creativity**

Creativity within this research is defined as inventive and imaginative (Moore, 2004). It has to be original or innovative, whether a reinvention of the old or the development of the new. Advertising literature further defines creativity as "the ability to consider and hold together seemingly inconsistent elements and forces, making a new connection" (O'Guinn, 2009). It is essential in the advertising world because a successful marketing campaign demands a "constant seamless synthesis" (O'Guinn, 2009) of the product and entirely different ideas or concepts. Creativity, or more precisely a creative concept, is an original idea,

supporting the advertising strategy and dramatising the selling point (O'Guinn, 2009; Wells, 2008).

#### **1.4.7. Perception**

The Oxford Dictionary (B. Moore, 2004) describes perception as an interpretation or impression based on one's understanding of something. In advertising it is described as a process by which we receive information through our five senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, and assign meaning to this information (Wells, Spence-Stone, Moriarty, & Burnett, 2008). The consumer will give the advertisement meaning while receiving and processing the visual message. This will conclude in an impression or perception that the consumer will develop, based on the personal context and background of the consumer.

#### **1.4.8. Provocation**

Moore (2004) defines provocation as an act or an instance of provoking a state or the cause of annoyance. By law it is an action or an insult, which is closer to the idea of provocation in this thesis. However, provocation in this case is best described as causing annoyance, anger or any other strong reaction that is deliberate.

Firtzsche (2005) adds to the definition of provocation in shock advertising by saying that norms are violated through taboo motives such as sex, violence, religion, politics and clichés and that known conflicts in values, ethics and morals are exploited. The recipient is to respond to the communicated message through irritation, distortion and confusion, in order to create reactions such as attention, interest, sympathy and rejection. The combination of these two definitions describes the use of provocation within this context most appropriately.

#### **1.4.9. Offensiveness in advertising**

Offensiveness can be described as insulting, aggressive or attacking behaviour. It can be an aggressive or forceful action, or in this context a campaign in pursuit of a cause (B. Moore, 2004). Campaigns cause a reaction of offence within the consumer through aggressive, attacking, and forceful visual material in advertising campaigns. The overall background of its use influences the definition of offensiveness. The cultural context needs to be considered (Phan & Prendergast, 2001).

#### **1.4.10. Desensitisation**

Desensitisation is a psychological process. In the sense of a dictionary definition, it reduces or destroys the sensitivity of the consumer to advertising (B. Moore, 2004). For the purpose of this research it describes that the continued exposure to advertising and especially to offensive or provocative advertising in mass media will result in undermining the feelings of concern towards those visuals. However this is merely an assumption as there is still debate as to whether this is occurring or not.

#### **1.4.11. Taste and Decency**

The usual meaning of taste is the reference of a sense of flavour perceived in the mouth. It can also describe an experience, a liking, or aesthetic discernment in art literature or conduct of a specific kind. Taste within the context of this research can be defined as a conformity, or failure to conform, with generally held views concerning what is offensive or acceptable (B. Moore, 2004). Within shock advertising it can be seen as a way to express aesthetic advertising standards.

Decency is generally defined as conforming to current standards of behaviour or appearance that avoids obscenity, impropriety or immodesty. It is a reflection of the requirements of accepted, passable or respected behaviour (B. Moore, 2004). Public decency extends the idea to what the public, communities or cultures see as respectable behaviour.

#### **1.4.12. Viral Marketing**

Viral marketing is a reaction to the new growing media. It is the process of consumers marketing to consumers over the internet through word of mouth, the transmission of messages through emails and electronic mailing lists. The idea behind viral marketing is to target a handful of carefully chosen trendsetters or connectors as your influencers and then let them spread the word (O'Guinn et al., 2009).

## *Chapter II*

### **Painting the picture**

For this chapter a framework has been established to look at the collected literature. This framework includes several concepts that crystallised as core themes in the research on shock advertising. These concepts include the definition of advertising and shock advertising, the consumer effects, and the system of self-regulation. These concepts allow a look at the data from a theoretical point of view, unravelling current debates and opinions in regards to shock advertising.

The literature was gathered from various well-respected books, articles and journals. These have been combined into different sections, each describing essential aspects in assessing an understanding of shock advertising from a theoretical perspective. This understanding will be important in later chapters, which discuss and compare the theory to the research conducted.

### **2 What is in the literature?**

What would it be like if there was no advertising? No newspapers full of advertisements where one has to search for the articles, no breaks during favourite television shows, no interruptions during the most suspenseful last minutes of a movie, no unwanted phone calls by telemarketers trying to sell you a product or service while you are having dinner with your family? This does not sound too bad. But how would we be informed about the newest products or services? Would the media exist in the way it does today without depending on advertising revenue?

## 2.1 History and Development

Before looking at shock advertising, this section will give an understanding of where advertising originated from, its very first purpose and how it developed from there. This will highlight changes and adjustments within the evolution of advertising throughout the centuries, and help understand the current design of advertising, especially shock advertising.

It is not known precisely when or where *Homo sapiens*, the biological species of conscious, thinking creatures, emerged. However, a number of quantum leaps provided the capacity to organize a community and gain control over human destiny. Speech allowed the possibility to make sounds in order to communicate. Writing is the visual counterpart of speech in the graphical form of symbols, pictures or letters. The invention of writing gave people the ability to preserve words or stories, to communicate wisdom, knowledge, experiences, as spoken words just vanish (Meggs & Purvis, 2012).

The name “advertising” has its roots in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, meaning a “written statement calling attention to something”, or public notice of anything, but often of something for sale. The word comes from *avertissement*, from the stem *avertir*, which is French for warning, caution to inform or notify. *Avertir* relates directly to the word *advertise*, to take notice of, coming from the same stem *avertir* “to warn”, Latin *advertere* “turn toward”, [*ad-* “toward” and *-vertere* “to turn”] from the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The meaning shifted in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century to “to give notice to others, warn” through the influence of *advertisement*, with the specific meaning “to call attention to goods for sale or rewards”. The original meaning remains in the verb *advert* “to give attention to” (“Advertisement,” 2012; “avertir,” 2012).

It is not exactly known when advertising really started. Some argue that the first roots were during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, while others describe early forms of advertising beginning with the Romans or Greeks, examples of advertising and promotion having been found in the ruins of Pompeii. In classical antiquity the Greeks and Romans designed and illustrated manuscripts, but few have survived. It is fairly safe to say that advertising has been around for as long as there have been goods to sell and a medium to talk them up. The shopkeepers of the early Greek and Roman merchants used signs to advertise their products;

however, as many people were not able to read, signs and symbols were predominantly used (Tungate, 2008).

The breakthrough for advertising, however, came with the invention of the printing press and movable type by the German former goldsmith, Johannes Gutenberg in 1477. This allowed for printed materials to be mass-produced. Advertisers began to use quickly printed shop bills and flyers to reach thousands of people (Bovée, Thill, Dovel, & Wood, 1995; Tungate, 2008). By the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century, printed posters and signs were appearing all over England, predecessors to today's billboards. However, it is not certain from literature when the first advertisements really appeared. The dates and appearances of advertising are still debated today. A New York Times article from 1871 ("Newspaper Advertisements,") places the first advertisements for books in 1652, where the *Mercurius Politicus* advertised a heroic poem, the "*Irenodia Gratulatora*" and siring the whole progeny of advertisements. Adage places the first newspaper advertisement - an announcement seeking a buyer for Oyster Bay, a Long Island estate - published in the Boston News-Letter in 1704. According to Boone, one of the first English printed advertisements was a handbill printed by Caxton in 1477. (Age, 1999; Boone; Daye & VanAuken, 2008).

Most histories of advertising start in the late to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. A hunt for the earliest advertisement in 'The Creative Directors Source Book', compiled in 1988 by Nick Souter and Stuart Newmann, unearthed a newspaper advertisement from 1849. The earliest advertising agents worked for newspapers rather than for advertisers. They acted as intermediaries, selling space in a newspaper and taking commission out of the fee (Tungate, 2008).

Theophraste Renaudot is an important name in the development of advertising, according to Tungate (2008). He created the first French newspaper, which he called *La Gazette* in 1631. He thus became the first French journalist and the inventor of the personal advertisement. In Great Britain, the first advertising agent was most likely William Tayler, who opened an office in London's Warwick Square in 1786. His firm later became known as Tayler & Newton and acted as an advertising sales representative firm for printers (Tungate, 2008).

The technology of the Industrial Revolution (1750-1850) changed both the pattern and the economics of production and consumption, further fuelling the growth

of advertising as a mass medium. The invention of photography gave advertisers a new way of showcasing their products. The telegraph, telephone, typewriter, phonograph and motion picture opened up new avenues of personal and business communication. The Industrial Revolution created fast growing factories and mass-produced goods, developing, with growing customer demand, leading to a widening gap between consumers and producers. To close this gap and stimulate demand it was necessary to sell larger quantities. Chains of retail establishments and companies started to brand goods. Businesses turned to advertising to easily reach as many potential customers as possible (Bové et al., 1995; Tungate, 2008).

Photography changed the face of advertising entirely. The development of the early stages of photography began with Joseph Niepce (1765-1833). It was not until 1888 that George Eastman (1854-1932) gave the public the power of photography by introducing his Kodak camera. It was an invention without precedent, as ordinary citizens gained the ability to create images and keep a graphic record of their lives and experiences. During the 1880s and 1890s photomechanical reproduction quickly made craftsmen obsolete, as the photographic process reduced the time from creation to printing plate to one or two hours, greatly reducing costs (Meggs & Purvis, 2012).

In Great Britain a prominent example of the start of advertising was A & F Pears, the makers of Pear's Soap (Image II-1). Prototype adman Thomas J. Barrett, who joined the firm in 1862, established their success. The company secured the first celebrity endorsements with Lillie Langtry, actress, courtesan and mistress of the Prince of Wales ("A brief history of advertising," ; Tungate, 2008; Twitchell, 2000).





**Image II-1: Pears Soap ad 1889** ("Victorian Ads Pear's Soap," 1889)

By advertising their products to the public, manufacturers were able to boost sales dramatically. Furthermore, companies began to realise the positive association with a brand. Not only were businesses able to increase a retailer's turnover, but the customers also had a wider choice of brands and a greater guarantee of the quality of goods ("A brief history of advertising," ; Tungate, 2008; Twitchell, 2000).

The "creatives" within the advertising industry emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The most influential at the time was John E. Powers, a freelance copywriter, described by the Advertising Age (cited in, Tungate, 2008) as "the father of creative advertising". Powers believed in honesty and plain speaking, claiming "fine writing is offensive". Powers showed that even in the early stages, advertising was seen as a possibly controversial, offensive tool. Although little is known about Powers, he was earning more than \$US100 a day writing copy in the 1890s. The success of Powers inspired another copywriter, Charles Austin Bates, who went on to found his own agency, becoming the first professional advertising critic. Bates further established a weekly column in the trade journal *Printer's Ink*. His agency was a "cradle of creativity", as described by Tungate (2008) and Fox (1997).

For centuries advertising had only appeared in three basic formats: handbills, outdoor signs and later, predominantly newspapers. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, advertising started to expand into another major format, creating a new and powerful medium of entertainment, information and selling: magazines. E.C. Allen was the first entrepreneur to sense the potential in magazines, launching the 'People's Literary Companion'.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the most dominant agency arising was in the United States, J. Walter Thomson. Thomson joined an advertising agency run by William J. Carlton in 1868, when the agency still developed rather basic advertisements for newspapers and magazines. It was during this period that Thomson began to specialise in magazine advertising, developing publications available only to his clients. He prospered, not by cutting down competition, but by inventing his own domain. Ten years later he bought the agency and put his name to it. He opened offices in Chicago, Boston, Cincinnati and even London, being the first US agency to expand abroad, creating the first modern kind of advertising agency. The magazine world was transformed, starting in 1885 with four general magazines and a total readership of 600 000. Twenty years later twenty magazines existed with a readership of 5.5 million. In 1916 Thomson handed the business to Stanley Resor. He led the company JWT to great success, becoming one of the most successful advertising agencies to date (Berger, 2005; Fox, 1997; Tungate, 2008).

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century advertising had already started to become an integral part of the daily lives of the public. This was often highly unwelcome. Bovée (1995) observed that at the turn of the century advertising was believed to be a "true mirror of life". Others however, complained of being bombarded with advertisements every minute of the day.

Newspapers and magazines reached the urban areas and beyond, bringing new advertisements to millions of people. In 1925 the first four colour advertisement was placed in the nationally distributed Saturday Evening Post. The advertisement was for Whitman's Chocolates (Bovée et al., 1995).

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the United States was highly optimistic about the economy, in comparison to Great Britain. While waves of immigrants were attracted across the Atlantic by the booming US economy, Britain struggled to

come to terms with changes created by the Boer War, the death of Queen Victoria and women's demands for the right to vote (Tungate, 2008).

With the outbreak of the First World War, advertising was used to attract volunteers and recruits for the army. In 1917 the US army used a stern Uncle Sam pointing his finger with the slogan: "I want YOU for US army". This Image II-2 is still well known today (Tungate, 2008).



Image II-2: Uncle Sam Recruitment Poster (Martin, 2001)

The US Committee on Public Information was established in 1917, delivering encouraging speeches to potential volunteers, and using a highly effective US\$1.5 million worth of advertising. The poster was the main medium of communication in achieving this success. While printing technologies had advanced rapidly, the radio and other electronic means of communication were still not as wide spread (Tungate, 2008). The posters produced by the European Central Powers, including Germany and Austria-Hungary, displayed the simplicity of the Plakatstil. Words and images were integrated, and simplifying visuals into powerful shapes and patterns conveyed the essence of the communication. In contrast to this, the Allies, including France, Russia, Great

Britain and later, when they joined the War, the United States, used a more illustrative, graphic approach to propaganda. The posters had rather symbolic imagery to address propaganda objectives. Many posters appealed to patriotic emotions and emphasised the public's contribution to the war effort (Tungate, 2008).

After the First World War, and despite post-war difficulties, advertising was still gaining attention and importance. After being so successful during the First World War, the advertising professionals seemed even more determined to improve their techniques of persuasion (Fox, 1997; Tungate, 2008).

It was in the 1920s that radio developed as a mass medium. After photography changed the face of advertising, this new medium of radio advertising made the reputations of some of the advertising agencies. Radiomen were considered new, modern and unconventional pioneers of their day. As early as 1922, the first radio stations were opened, in New York called the WEAf and in Great Britain the BBC. While in Britain the BBC remained advertisement free, the medium in the US developed into an almost exclusive domain for advertisers. The two most active agencies using the radio in the US were JWT and Lord & Thomas, establishing businesses with enough power to stand between the advertisers and the networks (Fox, 1997; Tungate, 2008).

In 1931 Getchell started his own company, following JWT and Lord & Thomas. He hired the most talented photographers, creating ads around their images, using a tabloid approach with snappy copy and blazing headlines. In 1932 he launched an advertising campaign for Chrysler Plymouth. Getchell encouraged clients to compare the automobile with vehicles from Ford and General Motors to make an informed decision. This type of new honesty was well received by consumers, and had positive results for the Plymouth (Tungate, 2008).

The time between the World Wars began with unprecedented prosperity in much of Europe and North America. People had faith in the machine and technology, which further developed into an important design resource. America especially was influenced by the first wave of modern design, as a result of the cultural and social diversity achieved by the waves of immigrants entering the country (Meggs & Purvis, 2012).

Once the Second World War started, advertising designs also went back to war. The advertisements during the Second World War were not only designed to improve morale, but advertising agencies used the war to sell brands, and products were linked to the war effort. For instance, Texaco assured motorists that “the gasoline they were forced to do without was being put into war products to speed our forces to victory”. With the entry of America into the global conflict, posters also began to promote production. The intense feelings about Hitler, Pearl Harbour and the war seemed to inspire the graphic designers, illustrators and fine artists who created the posters for the Office of War Information (Tungate, 2008).

Leo Burnett (cited in, Tungate, 2008) described the Second World War as a demonstration of the power of modern advertising. “The government got an entirely new idea of advertising as an effective means of communication to the people of this big country of ours, and as a tool for getting people to do things on a voluntary rather than compulsory basis. This in itself was not bad public relations for advertising. [...] A lot of people... discovered for the first time that they had a moral obligation to society and could use their techniques just as effectively in selling ideas as in peddling goods” (Tungate, 2008).

The 1950s brought post-war prosperity to average citizens. The productive capacity turned towards consumer goods. The belief was that the outlook for the capitalist economic structure could be unending economic expansion and prosperity. Due to the development of commercial television broadcasting, which had begun in 1941 by NBC (part of WNBT), consumers were being hit with advertising messages as never before, showing fantasies of better living. The technological changes made corporate leaders understand the need to develop a corporate image and identity for diverse audiences. Advertising and design was seen as a major way in shaping a reputation of quality and reliability. These were the first stages in creating brand or corporate images. Vance Packard already realised the effect of advertising in the 1950s (Berger, 2005; Fox, 1997; Tungate,

2008). In his book “The Hidden Persuaders”, he claimed that “scientists were furnishing advertising agencies with awesome tools, with the result that many of us are being influenced and manipulated, far more than we realize in the patterns of our everyday lives” (Tungate, 2008).

Throughout the 1950s further advertising agencies emerged, for example McCann Erickson, Foote, Cone & Belding and Leo Burnett. These also used motivational research techniques for their campaigns. McCann Erickson was one of the first agencies to hire psychological research staff, developing a reputation for data driven efficiency, rather than creative flair (Fox, 1997; Tungate, 2008).

Already in the 1950s and 1960s, psychologists and social scientists were worried about the negative effect of the media on people. Questions arose about what advertising does to people and what people do with advertising (Boddewyn, 1992). From the early 1920s American cities had been awash with the texts and images of advertising messages, including newspaper headlines, political posters, graffiti and billboards. The signs developed into dominant constituents of urban space, filling perceptual fields and shaping cities (Geyh, 2006). With the extended confrontation of imagery from television adding to advertising in comic books and on radio, concerns arose about how children would make sense of these images (Brown & Witherspoon, 2002).

During the 1950s, a new design movement emerged from Switzerland and Germany that was called the International Typographic Style. Due to its clarity the design movement won converts globally, remaining a major force for over two decades and continuing its influence today. Key characters of this style included a unity of design through asymmetrical organisation of design elements. Photography and sans serif copy were visually presented in a clear informational way, without any propaganda, exaggerated claims and commercial advertising (Meggs & Purvis, 2012). However, the simplicity of the designs during this era also raised suggestions that there was a lack of creativity. Agencies were copying what others were doing. Some even went as far to say that the success of the time made the advertiser too cautious. After phototype became prevalent during the 1960s, skilled specialists, including graphic designers were hired to run the printing presses. This included typesetters operating text, production artists, camera operators and platemakers (Fox, 1997, Meggs & Purvis, 2012).

Once the 1960s came, another advertising history cycle began. Agencies changed from large to small services, researching art, inspiration and intuition. The three leading agencies of the period were Leo Burnett, David Ogilvy and William Bernback. The most striking advertising campaign of this period was that for Marlboro, by Leo Burnett, which turned the Marlboro Man into one of the longest running successes in advertising history (Fox, 1997; Twitchell, 2000).

By the end of the 1960s, the youth movements of the day made their impact on advertising. They were the first advertising generation, raised not only with books and magazines, but also with movies and TV. The hippy movement was unconventional and revolutionary, hoping to make the creative revolution serve a larger purpose (Fox, 1997).

With the 1970s, the cultural norms of Western society were beginning to be scrutinised and traditional institutions questioned. This was partly due to large agencies suffering losses during this time, including JWT and McCann, Young & Rubicam. Not only did the advertising industry go back to its ways of the 1950s - to mergers and corporate anonymity - but many economies also fell into a recession in 1971. The top five of the top ten agencies had gone public, however, the public did not rush to buy advertising agencies stock, which resulted in prices staying or falling below their original levels. Advertising did not benefit from the financial incentives of public ownership (Fox, 1997, Meggs & Purvis, 2012).

The quest for equality by women and minorities, growing cultural diversity, international travel and global communication added to the climate of cultural change. As the social activism of the late 1960s gave way to more self-absorbed, personal involvement during the 1970s, media experts spoke of the “Me Generation” to convey the spirit of the decade. This sense of personal involvement was reflected in the playful aspects of postmodern design (Fox, 1997, Meggs & Purvis, 2012).

During the 1980s and 1990s the rapid development of electronic technology, especially computers, began to change the processes and appearance of design and advertising. In 1981 IBM introduced the personal computer (PC), followed by the first generation of Apple’s Macintosh computers in 1984. This opened the door to overnight express mail, fax machines, electronic mail, global televisual

communication, international long distance telephone service and the Internet, expanding the impact of advertising (Meggs & Purvis, 2012, Bovee, et al., 1995).

“The advances in technology created a cultural milieu of simultaneity, until past, present, and future blurred into a continuum of information and visual form. This complex world of cultural and visual diversity has created an environment in which a global dialogue coexists with national visions, resulting in an explosive and pluralistic era for graphic design and advertising (Meggs & Purvis, 2012).

Culture has gradually evolved from production-based to consumer-based. Historian Rick Pollay identified advertising as becoming transformational, meaning that it became focused on the consumer's benefits, rather than product characteristics. This involved trying to change attitudes towards brands, expenditure patterns, lifestyles, and techniques for achieving personal and social success (Christians et al., 2009).

The commercial messages became faster and more frequent and consequently the modern media consumer was growing harder to impress. The Gulf War, Kosovo and HIV/AIDS, in counterpoint to lifestyle, good mood, luxury and consumption, caused a generally sceptical attitude within consumers.

Generation X describes the generation born between 1960 and 1980, following the Baby Boom and is a generation known for breaking the rules of what was traditionally and morally correct.

Benetton is an Italian fashion brand founded by Luciano Benetton, a fashion designer. In 1984 Benetton hired Oliviero Toscani as the photographer for their campaigns, giving him the job to implement a new advertising strategy, without giving any particular restrictions to guide Toscani. It had to be different whilst making people aware of the company's spirit and who they were. The repercussions these advertising campaigns had could not be foreseen at the time, and raised the question of boundaries of advertising (*Radical Advertising*, 2008). The strong emotionally charged images broke advertising taboos of the time, gaining attention with images that gave the audience goose bumps.



The earliest images appropriated the theme of multiculturalism through the branding of the United Colours of Benetton. Reflecting on these advertisements from today's point of view, they do not seem so provocative or controversial; however, at the time the campaign fuelled a debate. Image II-3 Nun and Priest was one example of many where Toscani made a social statement about the situation within the Catholic Church. This was not well perceived by a large amount of the population, especially Catholics.



**Image II-3: Nun and Priest (Wenzel & Lippert, 2008)**

Benetton's campaign was successful in the sense that it managed to target the morals of the time, and because the campaigns were so crucially different (Gierson, 1998; *Radical Advertising*, 2008), which opened the doors for controversial, provocative and shocking advertising.

Towards the end of the 1980s Toscani's work became more and more provocative, with an image of a black woman feeding a white baby, or a nun kissing a priest. Discussion emerged as to whether the advertisements were racist or commenting on racism. The press were releasing images in the media, including commentary that Benetton and Toscani were fools not to use the media coverage to their advantage. The provocative images continued into the 1990s, further pushing the boundaries of social and cultural norms. Taboos were confronted: sex, swearing, war, HIV/AIDS. Benetton's advertisements were not always perceived positively. In 1995 authorities in Germany banned Benetton advertisements that featured child labour, the human body stamped HIV+ and a bird stuck in an oil slick. These campaigns were banned as they were considered

to be exploiting the suffering of others (Ganesa, 2002; *Radical Advertising*, 2008; Tungate, 2008). Has advertising crossed the line? Nonetheless, Benetton managed to become one of the ten most powerful brands in fashion (cited in Meggs & Purvis, 2012 *Why shock tactics work like a dream*, 1999).

The Benetton campaigns have been researched in great detail; their place in advertising history shows how they opened the way for shock advertising, even though that was apparently never Toscani's intention: he wanted to make a social statement and raise awareness to problems of society. However by taking this revolutionary position they have a great importance within shock advertising, and the research in later chapters will reveal that these campaigns from the 1980s are still remembered today (Ganesa, 2002; *Radical Advertising*, 2008; Tungate, 2008).

Other companies followed this controversial style of advertising, such as Calvin Klein. In the 1980s the company advertisement featured a teenage model, Brooke Shields, in an overtly sexual and provocative pose (Image IV-1). The campaign attracted a large amount of publicity because of its controversial nature, which itself could be seen as free publicity and advertising. Klein has always been at the forefront of youth trends in advertising, and many of his advertisements deliberately included provocative graphics, typically of a sexual nature. "Sex sells" seemed to become a timeless cliché for some successful advertising ("Calvin Klein: A Case Study," 2008; Dahl, Frankenberger, & Manchanda, September 2003).

Directly related to the concept "sex sells", the Belgian photographer Wouter Deruytter photographed a number of billboard advertisements in New York between 1995 and 2005. He wanted to know: exactly how much soft porn does it take to break through the barriers of the consumer? The images were taken to comment on the physical presence of advertisements full of sex dominating the city. Deruytter made people think about how many sexual hints the city could endure (*Radical Advertising*, 2008).

In May 2000, the last advertising campaign Toscani photographed for Benetton was the most controversial of all. It featured images of death row candidates, men facing execution. The campaign not only generated a mass of outrage, but called for boycotts of Benetton stores around the United States. Even for

Benetton, Toscani had pushed the boundaries of acceptable advertising too far, and Benetton had to let him go, separating their paths after an 18 year partnership. Even today these advertising campaigns are seen as the forerunners of shock advertising (Ganesa, 2002; *Radical Advertising*, 2008; Tungate, 2008).

By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, digital technology enabled one person operating a desktop computer to create designs; new photo optical printing machines allowed the possibility of improving images. The World Wide Web, however, transformed the way people communicate and access information. This generated a revolution surpassing even Gutenberg's in its magnitude, according to Meggs & Purvis (2012). This technological development of the internet has continued to have widespread social, cultural and economical implications that cannot yet be fully understood. It has transformed the industry of advertising and design dramatically, opening new technological possibilities of communication for mass audiences. However, it has also expanded the number of media materials available to members of the public of all ages, questioning the control of the medium and when or where the materials are used (Brown & Witherspoon, 2002).

While modern art has developed into an artist working for himself, being rewarded for breaking boundaries, being out of line, being shocking with the new and taking liberties (Twitchell, 2000), norm violation has become a facet of advertising, developing into the term shock advertising. Within this context, the term shock advertising underlies its ability to break or cut through the advertising clutter and capture the attention of a target audience, listening to and acting on related messages (Dahl et al., September 2003).

The turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, according to Wippermann (2008, cited in Kultur, 2008) marked "radical life". According to him, "radical life" broadened brand experience further away from classical communication. The consumer has become more and more involved in online and offline events and the interaction of communication. The taboo of old seems quaint today (Dzamic, November 2006; Gierson, 1998).

## 2.2 Advertising, marketing and shock

To understand shock advertising, self-regulation and its processes, it is important to understand the basic concept of advertising. What is it? How does it work? What does it mean? This section will give an overview of what advertising is, and what shock advertising is. Both will be introduced as a form of mass communication and marketing strategy. As this research is from the advertisers' point of view, the marketing, branding and communication element within advertising needs to be understood to later understand the advertiser.

### 2.2.1. What is advertising?

"Mass demand has been created almost entirely through the development of advertising", US President Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933) noted (Casimir, 2010); supporting the golden rule of advertising of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: "Create the need, offer the solution" (Casimir, 2010). These quotes recognise that advertising has not only resulted from the need to advertise products and services, but that shock advertising has also created the demand for advertising of new products. The consumer wants to be informed and persuaded (Communications, 1997).

Advertising has traditionally been defined as a "paid form of non-personal communication about an organisation, product, service or idea by an identified sponsor" (Blech et al., 2009). William Bernbach from the Global Agency DDB describes advertising as fundamental persuasion, which happens to be an art and not a science (Casimir, 2010). In other words, advertising can be described as being a paid, mediated, complex form of communication from an identified source, designed to attract attention and persuade the receiver to take action now or in the future (Blech et al., 2009; "Calvin Klein: A Case Study," 2008; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2003).

The main objective of advertising and the advertising industry is to ensure that advertisements are legal, decent, honest and truthful and that they have been prepared with a sense of obligation to the consumer and society and a fair sense of responsibility to competitors, however, this will be covered in detail in Chapter II.2.5.2 ("Self Regulation in Advertising,").

It has become particularly important for a brand, a product or service to be presented in a striking way, resulting in the consumer remembering the message and possibly changing their buying behaviour through the impact on their thoughts, feelings and actions. Advertising additionally aims to build a company's image and lock it into the mind of the consumer. Through repetition and dissemination of information about an organisation, service or product, advertising reinforces the messages that create images of what a company aspires to become in the public eye (LaCaze, 2001; Manceau & Tissier-Desbordes, 2006; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2003; "Self Regulation in Advertising,").

As the practice of advertising has evolved, it has become a challenge to impress the consumer with striking advertising that communicates the intended message. Consequently, advertising has four different roles to play in media and society.

#### a. Marketing

The Marketing Department of a company is responsible for satisfying needs and wants by providing goods and services to the consumer. The particular group that these products or needs are marketed or advertised to is called the "target market". Tools available in marketing include the product, the price, place, and promotion. These tools are also referred to as the "marketing mix". Advertising is the most important tool of marketing promotion (Landa, 2006; Wells et al., 2008)..

Marketing is further concerned with the development of the brand, which is the identity of not only the product but of the company (Landa, 2006; Wells et al., 2008). This will be discussed further in the next section about context of marketing and brand communication.

#### b. Communication

Communication is a two-way process of reaching an understanding between participants, and can not only exchange information, but create and share meaning. Advertising is a form of mass communication. Mass communication can be defined as the use of mass media such as free-to-air television, radio, newspaper and magazines, as well as other media such as cinema and outdoor (such as billboards). For communications to be classified as advertising it must be paid for, attempting persuasion and must be delivered to an audience via mass media. It informs the consumer and connects buyers within the

marketplace, creating an image. In this case an image relates to the impression in the consumers mind of a brand's total "personality" that goes beyond the obvious facts. Communication includes techniques and tools used in marketing such as sales promotion, where a short-term incentive is offered to the consumer to encourage the purchase of products, services or goods. Public relations is about building good relations with the company's various audiences by obtaining positive publicity, including creating a positive corporate image and events. Personal selling is the oral presentation in a conversation with one or more prospective purchasers for the purpose of making sales ("Brand image," ; "Communication," 2012; Kotler, Adam, Brown, & Armstrong, 2006; O'Guinn et al., 2009; Wells et al., 2008).

#### c. Economy

Looking at the way advertising has flourished in society, it has moved from being simply informative to being a facilitator that can create demand for a particular service, good, or brand. Advertising can be a vehicle for helping consumers reconsider value through price, location and reputation, creating a more rational opinion (Wells et al., 2008).

Advertising is seen as persuasive, decreasing the possibility that a consumer will switch to alternative products. It creates brand loyalty, regardless of the price charged. "Hence, images and emotions can be used to influence the consumers' decisions" (Wells et al., 2008).

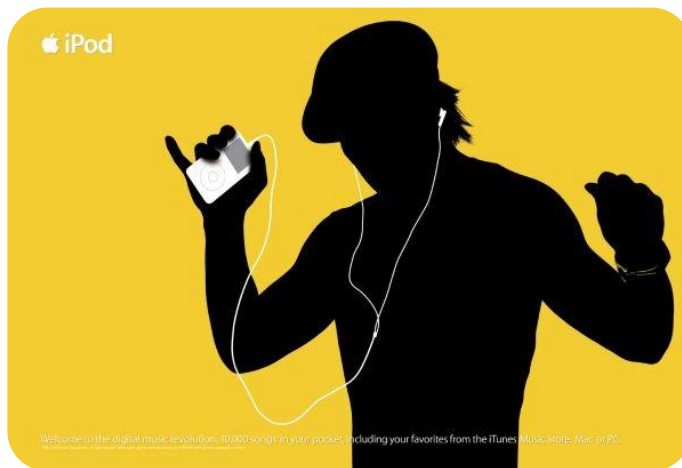
#### d. Society

Advertising has come to play a number of roles within society. As Marshall McLuhan (cited in, Wells et al., 2008) describes "one day [we will] discover that the ads of our time are the richest and most faithful reflections that any society ever made of its entire range of activities." Advertising has the power to inform and educate us about new, improved products. It supports the comparison of products, features and prices. Furthermore, it keeps the consumer informed about new technologies, innovations and issues. Advertising mirrors fashion, and design trends of the industry help project an image of ourselves, shaping our personalities and a sense of style through role models that we as consumers can identify with (O'Guinn et al., 2009).

Advertising in developed countries has three tasks. The first task is to encourage companies to spend money advertising their goods and services. This creates employment within research organisations, advertising agencies and the media. The second task is to ensure that advertisements fulfil their intended job, which is to prompt purchase of the brand, the goods and services being advertised. The third task is to ensure these purchases continue and effectively grow (Plessis, 2008).

The demand for advertising originates from the consumer need for accurate information about goods and services. A vibrant market system depends on the freedom of commercial speech for business people and on the freedom of consumers to receive information (Boddewyn, 1992; "Self Regulation in Advertising,"). As a result, advertisers wish to communicate with an audience who are the prospective consumers of the wares they advertise. Advertising helps persuade customers to select one product over another (Anderson, 2005; Bovée et al., 1995). When an audience decides to purchase a product, they are in effect deciding to consume the advertising information that has been supplied by a company to promote that product. The cost of the product includes a portion of funds spent in advertising to promote the firm's product. Due to the high level of creativity, some advertisements can be seen as having an identity in their own right away from the actual product being portrayed (Kenyon, Parsons, & Wood, 2008; "Self Regulation in Advertising,").

Apple, for instance, was first introduced in the 1970s, bringing the computer into the consumer's home. Their high level of creativity and innovation, not only with their technology, but most importantly with their advertising, has allowed the company to portray more than just a product: Apple has managed to sell their product as the lifestyle the product creates. The brand has developed an identity that goes beyond just selling a product, due to its high level of brand awareness of modernity, fun, technology and a hip lifestyle. In the US market for online music, Apple holds 70% market shares; in 2007 internationally it was 75%. High demand allows the brand, and especially the profits, to grow. The corporation has developed a special way of presenting itself, through its exclusive 'shop experiences'. The Apple Stores, first opened in 2001, give the consumer a special experience of their digital world of music, technology and lifestyle ("Apples Weg vom Computerschrauber zum Lifestyle-Anbieter," 2007; Lee, 2011).

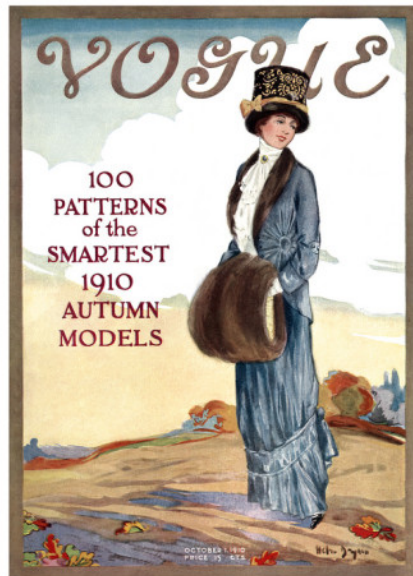


**Image II-4: Apple Inc. Silhouettes Advertisement (2004)** ("Yellow Print Ad for iPod and iTunes," 2004)

This Apple advertisement Image II-4 does not even show the product close up, nor does it describe its features, but simply portrays a carefree attitude suggested by the model dancing. The emphasis is not on the model but the lifestyle that is portrayed. ("Apple," 2012; Goldberg, 2011). In 2010, Adage named Apple its first 'Marketer of the Decade' and Adweek named its campaigns 'Get a Mac' and 'Silhouettes' the best of the decade in their respective categories (Goldberg, 2011).

Apple shows that advertising is not only a vital business tool, but an integral part of our media culture. "It is the commercial foundation that supports most mediums and a considerable portion of media content is advertising" (LaCaze, 2001). An example of LaCaze' statement - that a medium can support and therefore carry a considerable amount of advertising - is the French October 2010 fashion issue of Vogue, in which the advertising content actually shapes the fashion magazine.





**Image II-5: Vogue Cover 1910 ("Vogue USA Covers," 1910)**

Vogue was established in 1892 and has developed into a popular fashion magazine printed worldwide (Image II-5). It aims to enlighten, entertain and inspire the target audience - smart, stylish females 25- 54 - or anyone who loves fashion.

"Every month, Vogue Australia celebrates all the joys and pleasures of being a woman. Our philosophy is to enrich the fashion, beauty, health, celebrities, current affairs and the arts. What's real indulgence? Rewarding yourself!"  
Kirstie Clements, Editor-In-Chief (Government; 2010).

With its combination of a modern mix of glamour, style and writing it has become - particularly in Australia - the number one prestige fashion magazine (Anthony-Dharan, 2007; Fortini, 2005).

The October 2010 issue of Vogue weighed 1.6kg and contained 624 pages, of which over 550 pages were exclusively advertisements. The preface of the magazine started on page 473 "which makes you question the value of the magazine articles, as there are hardly any there" (2010).

Vogue Magazine - and other magazines such as Marie Claire, Elle and Cosmopolitan - all have similar features. The advertising provides financial support for most media. For other media it is the *only* source of revenue (LaCaze, 2001).

In today's advertising environment it is not easy to create a brand or image that still impresses the consumer and leaves a good lasting image behind, such as the one Apple has been able to create. Most consumers consider commercials, print ads and Internet advertising as intrusive. They passively attend to ads while engaging in different tasks or activities. They pass by billboards in their cars, flip through magazines while waiting at the doctors or make coffee during television commercial breaks. As a result, advertising uses commonly known symbols and signals to communicate the message as fast as possible to the consumer, who is usually highly distracted (Reichert, 2003).

Sibley & Harré (2009) describe two types of advertising that are most common in today's practice. The first type of advertising is positively framed advertising, which is designed to model safe behaviours and increase appeal through the use of humour and other friendly techniques. The second type of advertising is the negatively framed advertisement playing a significant role in changing and driving the attitudes of the consumer. Practitioners believe that if consumers like the advertising they see, hear or read, it may be too 'soft' to break through the competitive clutter (Bartos, 1981; Sibley & Harré, 2009; Waller, 1999). The consumer either likes it or does not even bother remembering it. It engages the consumer or they mentally switch off (Blech et al., 2009). The other issue with hard hitting or negatively framed advertisements is that the consumer becomes desensitized to anything that they see repeatedly, says Dan Gregory (cited in Casimir, 2010).

It is vital not only from an economic, but also a social perspectives (Christians et al., 2009; Volkov, Harker, & Harker, 2005) to recognise that advertising is an economic power in the US and globally. Total advertising expenditures in the US were \$150 billion in 2006 and a gross product of USD\$412 million in 2009. "This expenditure alone stands as a testimonial to its value as a strategic marketing tool" (Blech et al., 2009; Christians et al., 2009).

Global spending on advertising has grown dramatically, with advertising expenditure in the US, the UK and Australia rising to over 1 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product. Global advertising spending is to increase by 4.9% in 2012 to over \$465 Billion. Looking at global advertising by media type, according to Barton (2012), it reveals that global TV advertising is expected to grow by five percent in 2012 to US\$188.5bn, equivalent to 40 percent of global spending. Global print advertising is expected to grow by half a percent, accounting for a 26.4 percent share. Other traditional formats including cinema and radio will grow by approximately four percent. In contrast, global online advertising is expected to grow 12.8 percent to \$83.2bn in 2012, accounting for 18 percent of global ad spending. Barton (2012) says, "Online advertising will continue along its growth trajectory fuelled by strong growth in emerging markets and increased spending volumes on social networking and online video advertising." Similar observations can be made within Europe, with online advertising expected to grow by 6.7 percent in 2012 (Barton, 2012).

ZenithOptimedia was expecting an annual growth between 4.6% and 5.2% for 2011 to 2013 after a strong 4.9% growth in 2010. Global advertising expenditure is to exceed the 2008 peak in 2012, with the likelihood of developing markets growing much faster than developed markets. Internet advertising will be growing three times faster than the market as a whole, as display advertising is now the fastest growing internet category, driven by online video and social media (ZenithOptimedia, 2010).

### Advertising share by medium: Worldwide

Internet ad expenditure set to overtake magazine spend in 2009, 2007-11

	Advertising spend share (%)				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Television	37.3	38.0	38.6	39.3	39.2
Newspapers	26.9	25.1	23.4	22.2	21.2
<b>Internet</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>13.8</b>	<b>15.1</b>
Magazines	12.2	11.6	10.5	9.9	9.7
Radio	8.0	7.7	7.6	7.4	7.2
Outdoor	6.5	6.7	6.8	6.9	7.0
Cinema	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.6

www.DigitalStrategyConsulting.com

Source: ZenithOptimedia, Jul 09

4731

Interpretation: Not all countries itemise spend by media channel, so are not included

Figure II-1: Breakdown of global advertising expenditure by medium [US \$millions] (ZenithOptimedia, 2010)

Advertising is an enormous global business as Figure II-1 shows, with expenditure estimated in Australia alone at \$13.2 billion in 2007. The fastest growing advertising regions are the Middle East and Central Eastern Europe, whose double digit growth compensates for the underperforming US and Australia, where growth without online media was only 1.2% in 2006. As advertising is such a big business, it is an integral part of our social and economic system. It has developed into a vital communication system for both consumers and businesses (Blech et al., 2009).

Within this difficult advertising environment critics remind us that advertising has been treated with a certain amount of mistrust from its early days in the 19th century. The critics of advertising, such as Graham (2008) say that “from its birth, advertising has always been treated with some suspicion.” This suspicion is due to over exaggerations within advertising, claims that are not upheld and the moral conflict advertising. Customers understand through experience that some adverts are presenting products or services better than they sometimes really are, which is why the systems of regulation are in place. This will be discussed in further detail. J. Walter Thompson (1925) took it a step further by saying “advertising is a non-moral force like electricity, which not only illuminates but electrocutes. Its worth to civilisation depends upon how it is used” (cited in Casimir, 2010). Thompson reminds the consumer and the designer to treat advertising with caution. The designer especially the designer needs take care as the way they use advertising can determine the “illumination or electrocution” of the consumer.

### **2.2.2. What is the function of advertising from a marketing perspective?**

When looking at advertising it is important to understand the role it plays in a firm’s marketing effort. As this research focuses on the perspective of the advertisers it is essential to understand their background and how they design advertising. The intention for which the advertisement is created, its purpose and result needs to be understood to appreciate the point of view of the advertiser. Including the business and marketing perspective will further open up relevant questions.

Advertising is a key element in the process of marketing. As previously noted, the marketing mix consists of four main categories: product, price, distribution and promotion. Advertising is an integral business tool as it can create demand and desire for brands, as well as make promises which help build the brand (LaCaze, 2001).

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) entails the coordination of an organisation's promotional efforts, such as major communication elements of advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct and online marketing and personal selling. The IMC efforts of a company consist of a specific blend of these elements that work most effectively together to meet the objectives set by the campaign (Kotler et al., 2006).

Advertising is part of the Integrated Marketing Communication and Brand Communication Tool. It does this by contributing directly to the marketing process, by:

- a. Contributing to the marketing mix
- b. Developing and managing the brand
- c. Achieving effective market segmentation, differentiation and positioning
- d. Contributing to revenue and profit generation (Kotler et al., 2006)

The role advertising plays in marketing and brand communication is separated for the purpose of this research, as marketing incorporates advertising from a pure business perspective. This point of view is relevant to better understand the business side of advertising, and more importantly the point of view of the advertiser. Advertising in marketing has a very distinctive role and is a tool to achieve marketing objectives, while brand communication advertising has a much more dominant role, where the advertiser is directly involved in creating a brand through advertising. This includes several different factors which will be discussed in Chapter III to show how advertising fits in.

Integrated brand promotion (IBP) is also an integral part of the communication of a brand. It is defined as the process of using a wide range of promotional tools working together to create widespread brand exposure (O'Guinn et al., 2009). Even though this is an integral part of marketing and advertising, this will not be discussed in further detail within this thesis. The literature is very inconclusive

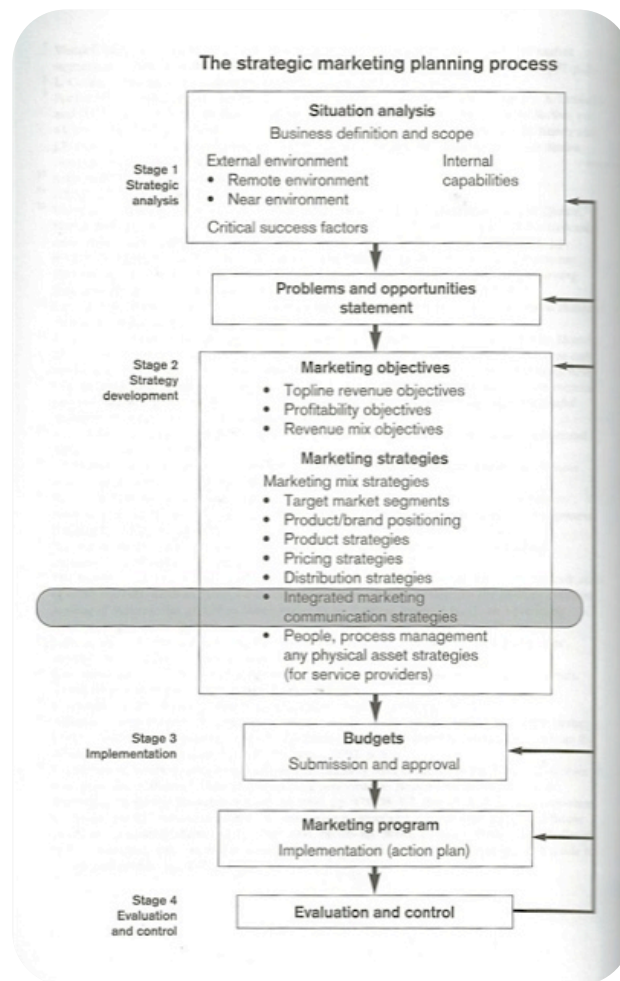
about the separation of or cooperation between advertising and promotion. This needs to be discussed in further detail and researched on its own.

#### 2.2.2.1. Advertising as part of Marketing Communication

The role and purpose of marketing communications varies across cultures. Different cultures internationally have different purposes for their marketing communication, which are reflected in the difference in timing and frequency of verbal or visual “mentions” of the brand name, especially in commercials. Every organisation has to make marketing decisions to develop a brand and price, and advertise and promote it accordingly to the target audience. However it needs to be recognised that advertising is only a relatively small part of the system of Marketing Communication (Kotler et al., 2006; Mooij, 2010; O'Guinn et al., 2009).

A generally accepted version of the system of Marketing Communication is presented in Figure II-2. The four stages of Marketing Communication begin with:

- a. Strategic analysis
- b. Strategy development
- c. Implementation
- d. Evaluation and control



**Figure II-2: Marketing Planning Model (Reed, 2006)**

This research is concerned with stage two and onwards. This includes the marketing objectives, which are the revenue and profitability of the product or service to be marketed, and the marketing strategy. The marketing strategy is concerned with how to place a product or service, which thus requires information on the target market, the product and brand positioning, product strategies, pricing, distribution, people process management and, most importantly, the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). As previously mentioned, the IMC focuses on the communication effort and the provision of coordinated messages to the consumer.

Within the IMC there are five categories:

- a. Sales Promotion
- b. Public relations publicity
- c. Database or direct marketing
- d. Personal selling
- e. Advertising

In this context advertising is used to communicate persuasive information to its audiences based on the values previously created relating to the product, price and distribution.

There are four main types of advertising from the marketing perspective.

1. Consumer Orientated Advertising, which covers most advertising. This is generally orientated at consumers - individuals with or without families, who buy the products and services. This type of advertising can be targeted to the buyer of a product or a user.
2. Retail Advertising is mostly local advertising, which is much narrower, concentrating on a more confined area such as a town. Retailers trying to attract their consumer to their stores - including supermarkets and department stores - place retail advertising. The advertising mostly announces facts about the products that are available at nearby stores. Retail advertising is closely linked with local advertising.
3. Business to Business Advertising (B2B Advertising) directs its messages towards companies distributing products as well as industrial purchasers, such as not-for-profit organisations or government agencies. Most of this business advertising appears in professional publications or direct mail sent to the buyers. B2B is not directed at the general public.
4. Corporate Image Advertising, also called institutional advertising, has the intent of establishing a favourable attitude toward a company as a whole, not just a specific brand, product or service. It focuses on establishing a corporate identity or winning over the public to the organisation's point of view.

(Bovée et al., 1995; O'Guinn et al., 2009; Reed, 2006; Wells et al., 2008)



Shock advertising, the focus of this research, can include parts of all these advertising types. Shock advertising in this context can be seen as a creative message strategy. This means that the advertiser is using a message strategy to provoke a specific reaction from the consumer. In the case of shock advertising, the advertiser hopes to shock and create a reaction depending on the product or service that is being advertised.

#### 2.2.2.2. Advertising as part of Brand Communication Strategy

Advertising plays a significant role in developing a brand and the brand management for a product or service. The brand is an important business asset as it allows a firm to communicate consistently and efficiently with the target audience (Kotler et al., 2006; O'Guinn et al., 2009; Percy, 2008). "The brand has always been at the core of advertising", (O'Guinn et al., 2009). The brand is defined as being the origin or source of a product, to differentiate the maker from others who produce similar products. Currently the brand is generally used as a name, term, sign, symbol or any other feature that identifies the manufacturer or seller of a product or service (O'Guinn et al., 2009; Schultz & Barnes, 1999).

Advertising highlights the brand's features, price, emotion or availability. It relates directly to build brand awareness and positive brand attitudes, leading to strong brand equity. It further attracts the target market, which makes a direct contribution to the marketing goal of revenue generation (O'Guinn et al., 2009).

The brand communication strategy, has the goal to achieve brand awareness and build brand attitude through motivation, recognition, recall and involvement of the consumer with the brand. Brand awareness is defined as an indicator of consumer knowledge about the existence of the brand and how easily that knowledge can be retrieved from memory. Brand attitude is a summary evaluation that reflects preferences for various products and brands. To achieve the goal of brand attitude and awareness, advertising and promotional tools are used. While they are both equally important, this thesis will be focusing on advertising. There are several types of advertising to achieve this goal. Each type of advertising has a different objective (Schultz, 1984; Reed, 2006).

Advertisement	Objective
Repetitive advertising	to promote brand recall
Unique selling point	link a key attribute to the brand name
Reason why ads, hard sell ads, comparison ads, demonstration, advertorials, infomercials	to persuade the consumer.
Feel good ads, humour ads, sexual appeal ads	instil brand preference
Fear appeal ads	scare the consumer into action
Anxiety ads, social anxiety ads	change behaviour by inducing anxiety
Transformational ads	transform consumption experience
Slice of life ads, product placement/short internet film, light fantasy ads	situate the brand socially
Image ads	the brand image
social and cultural advertising	resolve social disruption and cultural contradictions

**Figure II-3: Advertising and its objectives (Reed, 2006)**

All of these types of advertisements in Figure II-3 are strategies that lead to brand awareness in different ways. However, it can be seen that shock advertising does not have an explicit category within Figure II-3. Shock advertising in this case can be described as a combination of several advertising strategies, including fear appeal, anxiety and sexual appeal. This raises the question of whether shock advertising really is a strategy within advertising, whether it needs a separate category or whether it can be included in these advertising strategies. This will be further evaluated in the Chapter V, where shock advertising is defined from the advertisers' point of view.

Loyalty to a brand is one of the most important assets a company can achieve. Brand loyalty occurs when a consumer repeatedly purchases the same brand to the exclusion of competitors' brands, which can result in habits, as the brand's name is prominent in the consumers' memory. Advertising plays a key role in this process, as it reminds the consumers of the values of the brand. This is most effectively done through consistent advertising, which includes brand harmonisation: the coordination or harmonisation of all the elements of a brand identity throughout all experiences. This entails the coordination of an entire branding program from logo to advertising, recognising that each element is an experience for the consumer that additionally has to communicate a consistent brand message and visual. The construct of the brand at the same time needs to allow for flexible or elastic construct to be able to adjust the branding slightly and therefore make it more appealing and modern. A consistent tone communicating the natural characteristics of a product, service or company will establish the brand in all verbal and visual communications (Landa, 2006; O'Guinn et al., 2009).

### 2.2.2.3. Placing advertising into Context of marketing and Brand Communication

Sassatelli (2007) states: "The advertising world and profession occupy an intermediate position between production and consumption, commodities and art, materiality and symbolic forms." This interjacent position is crucial for advertisers in defining their professional cultures, which then shape the image of consumption and of consumers and their purpose. Marketing and advertising operators filter the opportunities of the market, and construct promotional strategies through a variety of 'cultures of production'. Advertising worlds may function as melting pots for knowledge from an academic point of view, the consumer and advertisers.

When integrating shock advertising into the context of marketing and brand communication, the term needs to be discussed. What place does shock advertising have within advertising objectives of advertising campaigns? How can shock advertising be defined after setting it into the context of Figure II-3: Advertising and its objectives (Reed, 2006)?

Shock advertising incorporates objectives from fear appeal, sexual ads, social cultural or anxiety advertisements, because those advertisements use similar strategies and have the same objective as shock advertising.

As noted, advertising is an important business tool. It not only sells the product to the consumer but it shapes corporate identity, forming an important marketing and business tool. It shapes the way a company is presented to the consumer, communicating corporate and social values. All of these aspects of marketing, branding and advertising work together to create a unified picture to the business partners, clients and consumer (Gajda; LaCaze, 2001).

"In order for advertising to work as a business tool, it has to work as a vehicle of social communication. It has to fit into culture," says LaCaze (2001), since "advertising, both defines and is defined by culture and is perhaps best characterised as a 'Zerrspiegel', a fun house mirror, reflective but rich with distortion" (Gajda; LaCaze, 2001). As Bill Moyers noted (in Consuming Images, 1989, cited in LaCaze, 2001) "Mass-produced images fill our everyday world and our inner most lives, shape our private thoughts and our public mind".

Once shock advertising is placed in perspective within marketing and branding, it needs to be evaluated from a different point of view. Advertising, and especially shock advertising, is only a small aspect of marketing. Its importance varies and its objective is to add to the achievement of the marketing goal. Within the context of brand communication, shock advertising again is a term that needs to be discussed, and this will be done in the research findings.

#### 2.2.2.4. Summary

This section has given a brief overview of how advertising fits in to the scheme of business, and that advertising is a key element of marketing and brand communication. These elements are directly linked to each other. Every company needs to make the right marketing mix decisions to successfully advertise and promote their products or services to the target audience. These decisions have direct impact on the marketing goals. The interrelationships are essential to understand advertising and shock advertising.

#### 2.2.3. Defining shock advertising according to literature

So what is shock advertising? Within this section the term shock advertising will be discussed: what it means, and different forms and understandings of the term within the literature.

Within the last decade a change in the media environment has become apparent, reflecting that the advertising industry is in constant transition. Individuals are confronted with hundreds of millions of different advertisements every year. The audience has become more tolerant of much stronger and controversial content, ranging from more confrontational advertising, new TV formats such as reality TV and the obsession with celebrity culture, closely covered wars and crime chronicles (Dzamic, November 2006; Harker, 1998; O'Guinn et al., 2009). Additionally, new technologies such as the Web, mobile phone and instant messaging have altered the consumer's relationship with media from passive to active. Therefore, advertisers can no longer rely on the audience to behave as the passive receivers they once were. This has made audiences harder to pin down, more demanding and less predictable, demonstrating that advertising has developed to become a dominant and all surrounding part of life (Himpe, 2008; Twitchell, 2000).

The advertisers' aim is to fight for the consumers eyes and ears, engage them and grab their attention, as the only thing that can be bought from an audience is their "watching activity" (Colyer, 2002; Wernick, 1995; Wells, 2008; Waller, 1999). Often this means harnessing the natural curiosity for surprising new forms of communication, to discover the message rather than forcing it upon the consumer. Therefore, visual creativity in advertising involves the use of unusual and thus surprising pictures (Himpe, 2008; Rossiter, Langner, & Ang, 2003). "The taboos of old have become quaint today" (Dzamic, November 2006). This forces the advertising industry to adjust to the mentality of its audience, as it must suit their tastes and speak their idiom ("Has advertising crossed the line?," 2008).

Since 2000 there has been an explosion of alternative strategies within the communication industry, especially advertising strategies. Terms like guerrilla, ambient, stealth, buzz, viral, ambush and advergaming have gained increased popularity. Visual creativity has become dominant in multi-national and global advertising campaigns, as the interpretation of pictures is most universal in comparison to words or slogans. Possibilities have become endless within advertising to use alternative strategies to cut through the clutter of traditional advertising (Himpe, 2008; Messarias, 1997).

Conventional advertising lacks unpredictability, making it hard to catch the consumer off guard as the eyes and ears have been trained to spot these advertising messages. Shock advertising, however, is designed to break through this advertising clutter, to capture attention and create buzz. It attracts an audience's attention towards brands, services or public service announcements (PSA). Shock advertising is often controversial, disturbing, explicit and crass. Much of it entails bold and provocative messages that challenge the public's conventional understanding of social order. There are no niceties. Shock advertising encourages the remembering of advertised information and engages consumers in the message (Colyer, 18.3.2002; Dahl et al., September 2003; Wernick, 1995). Ethical standards seem to be challenged by the advertising industry, particularly through attention seeking images.

At this stage it is also important to note the difference between shock and offence. As already mentioned in the working definitions Chapter I 1.4.9. offensiveness can be described as insulting, aggressive or attacking behaviour. It can be an aggressive or forceful action. However, shock has the meaning of a

sudden and confronting effect about something, challenging the consumer. There is a sense of persuasion involved, which is a more gradual process. Offense is more aggressive and most importantly forceful with an attacking behaviour.

A shock advertisement is generally regarded as one that deliberately, rather than inadvertently, startles and offends its audience (Gustafson & Yssel, 1994). The offence is elicited through the process of norm violation, encompassing transgression of law or custom, breaches of moral or social code, or other things that outrage the moral or physical senses of its audience. They are usually about morality, designed to provoke through cultural taboo topics (Dahl et al., September 2003; Giersen, 1998). However, according to Dahl, et al. (2003), the shock appeal encourages audiences to remember advertising information and engage in message relevant behaviour. Shock advertising further tends to measure its success by the controversy the campaign generates. "What does not strike the consumers' attention fails in the industry" (Hielscher, April 2008).

Shock advertising excludes more people than it includes, as shock advertisements are created to speak to small slices of the population rather than the masses, by being selective about the values and attitudes that are fostered, encouraged and promoted. This selectiveness additionally encourages the notion that shock advertising in particular reflects the surrounding culture. Through the controversial, disturbing, and explicit nature of shock advertising the messages entail bold and provocative challenges of conventional understanding of the social order (Communications, 1997; Dzamic, November 2006; Garden, 2006; Hielscher, April 2008).

Shock advertising entails the use of several strategies that play on people's minds and emotions to sell a product. These strategies entail the use of fear, pain, violence, warnings, death and "conscience stabbers", words that make picture juxtapositions, such as a "gentle and painless mutilation". These strategies have the intention to distinguish themselves from traditional advertising by agitating, appalling, astounding, confounding, disgusting, causing dismay or disquiet, horrifying, jarring, numbing, offending, causing outrage, revolting, paralysing, scandalising, shaking, stunning, unnerving, unsettling and shocking the consumers (Saunders, 1996).

Advertising can offend and provoke consumers through the type of appeals and the manner of presentation. For example, people object to appeals that exploit consumer anxieties, however, “fear appeal advertisements are designed to influence consumers’ perception for the purpose other than purchase related decisions (Phan & Prendergast, 2001, Neal et al. 1999).

Todd Sampson from Leo Burnett Sydney (Casimir, 2010):  
“We discuss how much fear or shock or horror to use in ads. If you go too far, you paralyse people and they don’t go far enough, they discount what you’re communicating.”

Bryan-Wilson (2008) describes controversy as part of what billboards solicit; in order to stand out, they can be aggressive or provocative. However, it is important to determine what causes people to be offended by a particular advertisement, as such “positive offensive” outcomes can in fact benefit the brand (Prendergast, Cheung, & West, 2008; Waller, 1999). Steve Hall, the founder of AdRants (“Has advertising crossed the line?,” 2008), on the other hand, describes today’s imagery as a “sledgehammer to the face”. A great range of insensitive and unethical advertisements are being published in the media, which is being exploited by the promotional culture driven by sensationalism (Wernick, 1995).

Shock advertising challenges taboo topics to achieve reactions of astonishment, provocation and offence of different kinds from its audience. During its development, shock advertising has increased its potency by pushing the limits of acceptability even further, in order to reach an increasingly jaded, distrustful and desensitised audience (Communications, 1997; Dzamic, November 2006). As Bruce Gierson (1998) describes the situation, to be shocked “requires a measure of innocence that you rarely find these days in people over five”. The overexposure to shock advertising and its unsettling messages must be having some kind of effect on the deeper level in our minds. However, at this stage it is unquantifiable according to Gierson (1998).

B. Willams (Casimir, 2010) adds: “Shock value starts to wear off over time. The cumulative effect of shock gets people to a point of paralysis as well. It’s particularly true

with teenagers. The more you try to shock them, the more they reject you in the end.”

## 2.3 Consumers and shock advertising

Even though the consumer has been highly researched, it is important to understand the consumer and their relationship to advertising. We are growing up in a consumer culture, influenced by the purchasing of goods, products and services and an enhanced desire for these goods, which is fostered by advertising (Sassatelli, 2007). This section will provide a brief outline of how advertising works on and with the consumer. This will help understand measures the advertisers take to reach the consumer.

Consumers around the globe are increasingly influenced by commercial communications, in both developed and emerging markets. Advertisements do far more than just communicate a commercial message or diffuse advertising messages. A two-way relationship exists, described by Frith & Mueller (2010), between society and advertising in general and international advertising in particular. Advertisements transmit values that influence the behaviour of consumers, both individual and institutions. The US, the UK and Japan base their economic systems on distributing and producing goods, products and services far in excess of the consumer's basic needs (Frith & Mueller, 2010). This allows the possibility for advertising to communicate, shape and generate consumer needs for goods, products and services, or even educate them about products they might not even need, but are being persuaded to want. Distinguishing between what is a real or an artificial want or need is not an easy task.

As Kotler (1991, cited in Frith & Mueller, 2010) notes:  
“Consumerism is actually the ultimate expression of the marketing concept. It compels marketers to consider things from the consumer's point of view. It suggests consumer needs and wants that may have been overlooked by the firms in the industry. The resourceful manager will look for the positive opportunities created by consumerism rather than brood over its restraints.”



While advertising has been said to shape society, Frith & Mueller (2010) recognise that it also mirrors it. One's lifestyle dictates the way one consumes; one's wants and needs reflect the advertising message one perceives as effective (Frith & Mueller, 2010; Huehls, 2010). Holbrook (1987) recognised the importance in acknowledging that the advertiser must comply with the public's value system, rather than countering it, to convince potential customers to purchase products, services or goods. Empirical research has supported that advertising which reflects cultural values is more persuasive. Further, this means that what is forbidden depends on the cultural norms of the consumer (Frith & Mueller, 2010). Advertising is a powerful tool of communication. We live in a materialistic culture encouraging customers to buy and consume with the motto, consumption for the sake of consumption. Needs have been shaped by advertising that go beyond the biological needs of nutrition but the feeling to want more is created (Zinkhan, 1994). This can be seen as the negative side not only of shock advertising but advertising in general; materialism; which will be discussed in more detail in the section on Chapter II.2.4 Current debates about shock advertising and Chapter II.2.3.2 Undesirable consequences of advertising.

Fierstad and Wright (1994, cited in Megehee, 2009) appreciate that consumers are likely to vary substantially in their involvement in processing advertising messages. These variations include the direction and strength of ongoing cognitive activity whilst reading, watching or hearing an advertising message. While men and women respond differently to messages with the same stimuli, much advertising research has assumed that consumers all interpret advertising in the same or a similar way. However influences like cultural and individual differences are other aspects that change the consumer's motivational process of receiving and interpreting a commercial message (Hogg & Garrow, 2003; Lombardot, 2007; Megehee, 2009).

Consumer behaviour researchers have pointed out that individual differences can lead to wide variations of interpreting and responding, especially to emotional appeals (Chang, 2009; D. J. Moore, Harris, & Chen, 1995).

For example, marketers need to be aware that consumers with low self-esteem tend to be relatively more tolerant of offensive advertising, giving marketers greater flexibility in dealing with that audience segment (Prendergast et al., 2008). Individual differences among message recipients may lead to wide

variations in the manner with which people respond to emotional advertising appeals (D. J. Moore et al., 1995).

The consumer's environment and personal differences impact on their involvement in advertising and their responses to it. Mass media research has unravelled discrepancies in the perception of traditional mass media, such as newspaper or radio, compared to on screen advertising, including the Internet. Jones, Pentecost and Requena, in their 2005 study, found that informal polls implied that people strongly prefer to read from paper. The central theme that emerged from their study was that individuals have a better recall after viewing materials in print rather than on screen.

Perception plays an important role to understanding the consumer, as it directs the formulating of communication strategies. This includes how consumers sense the external information, how they select and attend to various sources of information, and how this information is interpreted and given meaning by the consumer. These processes are part of the perception by which a consumer receives, selects, organises and interprets information to create a meaningful picture. The perceptual process is influenced by the characteristics of a stimulus, which in this case are the advertisements, and the context in which these advertisements are seen or heard. This context includes external influences, such as culture, subculture, social class, reference groups and situational determinants. All of this impacts on perception and how the consumer interprets the advertisements (Blech et al., 2009).

Consumers are not likely to make their consumption decisions at the time of exposure, but rather on the basis of implicit or explicit remembrance of those stimuli (Lombardot, 2007).

### **2.3.1. Attitude and persuasion**

For decades, emotion has been conceptualised as consisting of two primary factors: cognition and arousal. Current work in the psychology of emotion suggests that emotional states are actually the result of a dual, independent motivational system within the human organism, positive and negative. Individuals can experience these two poles, positive and negative, with different

affect intensity. People often don't like advertising, as they don't like the idea that they are not the masters of their own behaviour (Hood, 2004).

Why does emotion and affect intensity play a role in persuasion of the consumer in regards to advertising? When individuals are exposed to affect laden and emotionally charged advertising stimuli, emotions are evoked, positive or negative, and these are in direct relationship to whether the consumer will perceive the advertisement positively or negatively. The consumer may exhibit a characteristic tendency to experience their emotions with varied magnitudes of intensity. This is likely to have a direct affect on the persuasion and attitude towards the advertised product, good or service, and any purchasing decision. Within research, there is a growing acceptance that emotion plays multiple roles in persuasion (D. J. Moore et al., 1995; Potter, LaTour, Braun-LaTour, & Reichert, 2006).

The consumer may make a purchase decision influenced by "that funny ad" they've heard on the radio every day, the advertisement which they have seen for the past three years which has built up brand recognition (Hood, 2004). Such advertisements are consistently experienced emotionally, with a consumer more likely to be persuaded when exposed to emotionally provocative stimuli, according to D.J. Moore et al. (1995). Recent advertising models of persuasion have demonstrated convincingly that advertising appeals are capable of evoking a wide range of emotional responses from the media audience (D. J. Moore et al., 1995).

These emotional responses are further directly linked to the attitude the consumer has towards an advertising campaign. Attitudes are considered determinants of behaviour. An attitude as explained by Fennis and Streobe (2010), a description with which most social psychologists agree, is defined as an evaluative response towards an object from which is derived cognitive, emotional and behavioural information. Even though consumers' purchasing decisions are influenced by a variety of factors, their attitudes towards a product, service and brand are powerful predictors of buying decisions (Fennis & Stroebe, 2010). Influences on their attitude include the context and environment of the consumer, their demographics, as well as their emotional state.

Previous studies suggest that violent photos in advertisements reduce the attitude towards the ad and the attitude towards the brand. Anderson et al. (2004, cited in Söderlund & Dahlén, 2010) found similar results of reactions to advertisements with negative images; for example, a violent picture. These coincide with other results showing that violence is less acceptable to the consumer than showing death, suffering, sex or nudity in advertising campaigns Figure II-7: Issues attracting Complaints (ASB 2008) (Söderlund & Dahlén, 2010). The intended outcomes of advertising campaigns are defined as changes in attitude and behaviour through persuasion of the individual. Consequently Cho and Salmon (2007) describe that campaigns intending changes in individuals may unintentionally modify the system of values and cultures of a society and its diverse subsectors.

### **2.3.2. Undesirable consequences of advertising**

Communication is capable of creating unintended outcomes, which has often gone unnoticed, according to Cho and Salmon (2007). They further note that unintended effects have remained under-theorised in communication and health communication campaign research. According to Schramm (1961, cited in Cho & Salmon, 2007) “communication effects are the result of multiple forces, of which the communicator can really control only one: the sender”. Thus the only part of an advertisement which can be controlled by the advertiser is the advertisement itself: the message, design and style of communication.

#### **2.3.2.1. Desensitisation of the consumer**

There have been studies and research conducted that imply change within the consumer, especially in direct relationship to threat, sex appeal and violence in advertising campaigns, whether print or screen. In the opinion of Brown and Witherspoon (2002) “viewing violence on TV increases the probability that viewers will be fearful, desensitised to real-world violence and become violent themselves”. Violent material can be consistently found in 58% to 61% of television programs (Brown & Witherspoon, 2002). These graphic and violent advertisements or movies contribute to the views and beliefs that violence is not a serious act and reduce an individual’s willingness to assist or intercede in real-life violence.

There has been a large amount of research into the repercussions of violence in advertising, or in media. Literature argues that media violence produces many negatively changed outcomes such as aggression, desensitisation, reduced empathy, and a positive attitude towards the use of violence. However, the process of desensitisation can also be found in the use of sex in advertising, and in shock advertising. Can exposure to graphic advertisements have the effect of changing the consumer's attitude towards sex, changing their level of acceptance? Bill Johnson, president of the American Decency Association, worries about exactly this point. According to Johnson, the easy availability of "racy" material to the consumer leads to an acclimatisation to it. Johnson further uses the example that naked bodies have become increasingly common in the entertainment business and people seem rather bemused by this (Steinberg, 2003).

The first to note the idea of desensitisation, especially in relation to the overexposure of messages about health risks, were Lazarsfeld and Merton in 1951. They called it the "narcotising dysfunction" of the media, which induces desensitisation toward social issues. In 1972 Downs (Cho & Salmon, 2007) already saw the possible effects of desensitisation, as "even the most powerful symbols lose their impact if they are constantly repeated: the piteous sight of an oil-soaked seagull or a dead soldier pales after it has been viewed a dozen times". Kinnick et al (1996, cited in Cho & Salmon, 2007) found that long-term diffusive media coverage was linked to desensitisation and emotional burnout toward issues such as HIV / AIDS, homelessness, child abuse and violent crime.

Despite the idea of desensitisation having been discussed since the early 1950s, there does not seem to be conclusive research to prove it in advertising in general, or in shock advertising. This will be discussed in more depth within the Chapter V.

Another aspect that can be seen as an undesirable consequence within the context of shock advertising is the threat appeal. Advertisers confront the consumer with the consequences that they will experience unless they stop risky behaviour or start preventative behaviour. Fear appeals constitute a fundamental element of health risk communication (Cho & Salmon, 2006). The threat appeal is a "persuasive message designed to scare people by describing the terrible things that will happen to them if they do not do what the message recommends"

(Cauberghe, De Pelsmacker, Janssens, & Dens, 2009). However, fear can also be an overlooked outcome of viewing messages. Just as desensitisation occurs due to the repetitive nature of strong violent or sexual themes, fear can be the opposite effect. When thousands of murders, rapes or assaults can be seen in the media each year, consumers can translate this into fear for their own personal safety in the real world (Brown & Witherspoon, 2002).

#### 2.3.2.2. Materialism

Advertising encourages materialism. Discussions have been ongoing as to whether advertising creates need rather than merely showing how a product or service fulfils needs. Advertising has been criticised for persuading the consumer to buy things they do not need, through manipulation. Those who defend advertising say it is essentially there to inform. It is the consumer's free choice as to how much they are willing to attempt to satisfy their needs and wants.

On the other hand, it is argued that advertising holds too much power, ignoring that consumers have the freedom to make their own choices by confronting them with persuasive advertising. Advertising surrounds the consumer with images of the good life, suggesting that acquisition of material possessions leads to contentment and happiness and adds to the joy of living. Further it suggests that material possessions are symbols of status, success and accomplishment, leading to greater social acceptance, popularity and sex appeal. It is argued that these are higher goals than covering the consumer's basic needs. This also leads to the age-old discussion of whether advertising drives materialism or reflects social values (Blech et al., 2009). Does advertising shape or reflect? Advertising plays an important role within culture, and will continue to do so. However there is a conflict between advertising reflecting society and its movements, and advertising pushing society into materialism. It can be debated that shock advertising is shaping whilst reflecting. This will be reviewed within the discussion chapter.

The majority of unintended effects are undesirable. Cho and Salmon (2007) describe changes only in intended audiences, however, this does not provide either a complete or an objective understanding of a campaign's effects. Advertisements can be delivered to unintended audiences in addition to the intended ones. The repeated exposure to messages about violence, sex and health

risks does seem to be an undesirable consequence of advertising. Undesirable, as the volume of communication desensitisation, and fear appeal in particular, play a part in making shock “the use of the otherwise unmentionable, which is a valuable way of breaking through the desensitisation barrier” (Huehls, 2010). This implies that advertisers need to use imagery that is more sexual and more violent and this can spiral. Where does it stop? As Downs already mentioned, the image of a dead soldier loses its impact after being seen a dozen times.

## 2.4 Current debates about shock advertising

Advertising has always been treated with a certain amount of mistrust and suspicion. Consumers can be led to believe that advertising agencies design campaigns intended to get publicity and bend the truth. This is an ongoing discussion within the literature. For this reason the following section will outline the main discussion points about the relevance of shock advertising (Bartos, 1981; Bovée et al., 1995; Hudspith, 2003).

### 2.4.1. Context and publicity of shock advertising

Shock advertising challenges the morals and ethics of societies in many different ways, depending on its context. However, the question of how effective it is has been debated. Is the main goal of shock advertising to gain publicity about controversial themes or to sell a product? Is any publicity good publicity? This leads to another question: how effective is shock advertising in causing controversy, selling a product or raising awareness?

Offence, shock, outrage or stimulation as a creative strategy is not new; however, its actual effectiveness is unclear (Prendergast et al., 2008). Dzamic (November 2006) describes the use of shock in advertising as playing with the media to gain extra publicity, exponentially multiplying the value of companies even with negative publicity, threats or boycotts. Gierson (1998) even goes as far as saying that the controversy caused by shock advertising is the measurement of success. The more controversy generated by a shock advertising campaign the more successful it is. Bartos (1981) states that a certain amount of irritation helps the effectiveness of advertising campaigns, and is actually needed to promote products, raise awareness or to push sales. Finally Hudspith (2003) describes that

shock advertising as a gimmick to push products or services. Companies do not necessarily consider whether their advertising is in line with corporate values.

Shock advertising tactics are more likely to be used by smaller companies for the purpose of cutting through the clutter of an oversaturated advertising world. Does this mean that when shock advertising gains attention or controversy it is successful? When looking at the literature defining shock advertising, it suggests that shock advertising is attention grabbing and unpredictability is a feature. The assumption is that yes, controversy caused by shock advertising is part of the measurement of the success of a campaign.

Studies have suggested that people only notice about 15% of advertisements they are exposed to, which indicates how difficult it is to communicate advertising messages successfully (Bovée et al., 1995). The easiest way of knowing whether an advertising campaign was effective is purely represented by sales. If sales rise, the strategy was effective. However, this does not work as easily for social advertising campaigns raising awareness (Casimir, 2010). Consumers being able to recall a brand is also considered an indication of a successful advertising campaign.

The context of an advertising campaign also needs to be considered. The context of advertising matters as it is relevant to know where the message will be consumed and the condition the target audience is in. Research shows that audiences decode advertising using their cultural knowledge and background, influenced by personal experiences, culture and communication within families and friends. These build a basis for the understanding and interpretation of advertisements (Bovée et al., 1995; Bronner, Bronner, & Faasse, 2007; Kenyon et al., 2008; Megehee, 2009). However competitors struggle to communicate their messages successfully as the audiences routinely misinterpret, confuse or ignore messages, reflecting that success is never assured (Bovée et al., 1995).

A campaign can also create confusion and misunderstanding, suggesting that it was not designed well enough to communicate the brand's goal, such as selling the product. The confusion can lead to fewer purchases due to a lack of understanding by the consumer (Cho & Salmon, 2007).



Procter & Gamble's former president Howard Morgens is quoted as saying (cited in Ogilvy, 2007) "We believe that advertising is the most effective and efficient way to sell to the consumer. If we should ever find better methods of selling our type of products to the consumer, we'll leave advertising and turn to these other methods."

This quote from Morgens highlights the issues and discussion on advertising even further. At this stage there is no alternative to market, promote or communicate products or services more effectively. So advertising defenders see it purely as a reasonable and efficient way to sell (Ogilvy, 2007).

Another point to consider within this discussion is that "empirical research has supported that advertisements reflecting local cultural values are indeed more persuasive than those that ignore them" (Frith & Mueller, 2010). This means that what is forbidden depends on cultural norms of the consumer. According to Whiteman (2004, cited in Manceau & Tissier-Desbordes, 2006) "for Europeans, private life is linked to personal honour, to the right to one's own image; while for Americans, what matters is liberty, and especially individual liberty versus federal control". These outlooks are fundamental to the attitude of advertising by the consumer.

As an example, in Germany a not-for-profit organisation launched an advertising campaign against HIV/AIDS Image II-6. This campaign had the intention of personifying the virus HIV as well-known dictators Hitler, Stalin and Hussein, with the slogan "AIDS is a mass murderer". This advertisement campaign was only run for 24 hours.



**Image II-6: AIDS ist ein Massenmörder (AIDS is a mass murderer) ("Verein wirbt mit Hitler für Aids-Aufklärung," 9.9.2009)**

It was pulled by the organisation and its advertising agency as it had an incredible impact in the media and amongst its audience. The advertisement was considered too provocative. There was enormous outrage regarding the social context of this advertisement and the lack of ethical consideration by the organisation. However, after receiving so much controversy and media coverage, it had to be argued that the advertisement was effective. It stirred discussion of HIV/AIDS and gained public awareness of the issues ("Verein wirbt mit Hitler für Aids-Aufklärung," 9.9.2009). The question still stands, however: is any publicity good publicity? When assessing the media coverage, it is noteworthy that the discussion was not only about HIV, but about the three dictators chosen to represent the virus. Even though this advertisement achieved the goal of publicity did it achieve the goal of awareness of HIV as much as the advertiser would have wanted it to?

"Given that the power of advertising is often cumulative and as much about emotion as action, it is hard to imagine that its effects could be truly measured and analysed, but that is not going to stop every brand from trying" (Casimir, 2010).

The individual difference among message recipients can lead to variations of emotional responses. This makes it important to understand the target audience well, including their demographics, backgrounds and setting. Marketing communication has to take into account the cultural and economic fabric of society, with different types of people, different races, different attitudes towards

messages (Terblanche-Smit & Terblanche, 2009), as well as different emotional responses.

#### **2.4.2. “Is advertising a bunch of lies?” (Ogilvy, 2007)**

It is frequently an assumption by the public that advertisements do not tell the truth. This reflects the idea that advertising exaggerates, and that everything is placed and marketed to the audience to convince them to purchase their products or services. However, technology makes nearly everything possible, especially in advertising. From makeup or beauty products that are being sold for perfect looks, to weight loss programmes and products priced extremely cheaply: to the consumer these things seem too good to be true. Such perceptions have been part of advertising discussions for a long time (Ogilvy, 2007). Deception, however, can occur more subtly as a result of how consumers perceive an advertisement and its impact on their beliefs. There is a certain amount of difficulty in determining what constitutes deception and being misleading, and the right of the advertiser the right to use “puffery” and make subjective claims about their products.

“Most advertisers do not design their message with the intention to mislead or deceive consumers or run sweepstakes with no intention of awarding winning prizes. Not only are such practices unethical, but the culprits could damage their reputation and risk prosecution by regulatory groups or government agencies. These companies invest large sums of money to develop loyalty to, and enhance the image of their brands. These companies are not likely to risk hard-won consumer trust and confidence by intentionally deceiving consumers” (Blech et al., 2009).

However, the regulation of advertising does not allow for lying. “If there are still any natural-born liars in advertising, we are under control. Every advertisement we write is scrutinized by lawyers”, (Ogilvy, 2007). Such scrutiny is done by the NAB, BBB, or in the UK the ASA. Consumers should not have a problem trusting advertising messages, but they do. Advertisers usually only present information in their advertising campaigns that is beneficial to their position, and this can

include not telling the whole truth about their products, services and goods (Blech et al., 2009). This again sparks mistrust within consumers.

The question of how effective the system of regulation, especially self-regulation, really is arises in the literature, due to the voluntary nature of the system of self-regulation in most developed countries. Even though laws and regulations exist regarding untruthful advertising, the administering of these seems to be slack.

It is necessary at this point to mention Adbusters. This is a Canadian based organisation that has the goal of “transforming our commercial media culture and directing it towards ecological awareness”. Adbusters has online and offline publications featuring articles that rethink well-known advertising campaigns. These advertising campaigns (see Image II-7: Absolute Impotence) , like slumped over vodka bottle “ABSOLUT IMPOTENCE” are “un-ads” to undo the millions of dollars invested in advertising by those companies such as Absolut (Frith & Mueller, 2010).



Image II-7: Absolute Impotence ("Avant-garde task," 2011)

These un-ads have been discussed by, and unsurprisingly have not been very popular with, many companies. An Adbusters bid to get their commercials aired on mainstream television was refused. The regulation of these types of advertisements is highly debateable, since within the system of self-regulation they are not doing anything wrong. The mainstream television ban is reasoned as being because the advertisements are still debatable regarding their intent. Adbusters broaden the debate of where regulation should start and end (Frith & Mueller, 2010).

## 2.5 Morals, Ethics and Self-Regulation

The following chapter will outline aspects of advertising that the designer will consider while creating a campaign. The question emerges: how are some graphic and controversial images within campaigns able to be published? Should there not be more ethical consideration when designing a campaign? This will lead to the exploration of the system of regulation of advertising in the UK, the US, Germany and Australia. As interviews with advertisers were conducted in these countries, direct comparison can be made between the literature and advertisers' statements. Gaps and discrepancies within the literature will be discussed and the system of self-regulation governed by the industry examined.

### 2.5.1. Morals and ethics in advertising

The idea of advertising regulation derives from a very simple concept, ethical behaviour; in this instance telling the truth about the advertised product, goods or service. There are primary guidelines for the advertiser to follow and respect. Advertising ethics have been defined by Cunningham (1999, cited in Drumwright & Murphy, 2009) as "what is right or good in the conduct of the advertising function. It is concerned with questions of what ought to be done, not just with what legally must be done."

There has been debate about the importance, definition and role of ethics within advertising, and it has proven to be a difficult topic. The study of Drumwright and Murphy (2009) explored the perspectives of industry and academics. This comparison between the advertising industry and academics used a similar approach to this research; however, the interviewees were not named in the

study. This does not allow for the qualifying of the research, as it is not known who was chosen. Within the context of ethics in advertising it is felt that disagreement between industry and academics is not the problem, but instead the avoidance of the topic and failure to engage in a collaborative dialogue. The study had a similar approach and aim as this research, aiming to open a discourse between industry, theorists and academics. However, the further aim of Drumwright and Murphy was to change the curriculum to adjust to professional standards. Their article reinforced the necessity of more communication on several aspects of advertising between the industry and theorists and reinforced the importance of opening discourse. There are still important differences between the Drumwright and Murphy study and this research. The ethical approach in their study differs slightly to the implications of the conducted research. And while Drumwright and Murphy mentioned social responsibility in relation to ethics, this research aims to make clearer distinctions, as the interviews conducted reveal differences within personal, professional and social ethics.

There are laws and regulations governing the practice of advertising from a legal perspective, since it is easy to determine whether truth is told. Nevertheless there are also codes of conduct and professional decision-making guidelines to help differentiate between right and wrong (O'Guinn et al., 2009; Wells et al., 2008). According to Wells (2008) these guidelines include three criteria that need to be considered when making an advertising decision.

#### a. Social Ethics

This includes the Golden Rule: Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you. The concept of what is determined right and wrong is based on moral rules, personal and professional standards and cultural values. In Western cultures ethical behaviour is mostly associated with morality, honesty, virtue, fairness, respect and integrity. From the perspective of advertising and marketing, social ethics are applied in the form of social responsibility. Social responsibility contains a corporate philosophy based on ethical values to motivate a business to have a positive effect on society (Wells et al., 2008).

### b. Professional Ethics

Within advertising there are differences in opinion between the consumer and the advertiser as to what can be called ethical. The consumer does not see the advertising professionals as ethical people, whereas the professionals do. Professional ethics are often conveyed in codes of conduct and standards that identify how professionals in the industry should respond when faced with ethical problems (Wells et al., 2008).

In Australia The Advertising Federation of Australia (AFA) provides guidelines in the form of a Code of Ethics for advertising practitioners. The code is a combination of broad principles and specific advertising issues that sets standards for behaviour. The AFA has also been offering workshops since 2002 to aid advertising professionals in understanding ethical practice.

The American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) has a similar set of codes that includes Standards of Practice. Within the core statement the Creative Code states:

“... in addition to supporting and obeying the laws and legal regulations pertaining to advertising, undertake to extend and broaden the application of high ethical standards. Specifically we will not knowingly create advertising that contains: false and misleading statements or exaggerations, visual or verbal; testimonials that do not reflect the real opinion of the individuals involved; price claims that are misleading; application of statements made by professional or scientific authority; and statements, suggestions, or pictures offensive to public decency or minority segments of the population “  
(cited in Wells et al., 2008).

Within this Creative Code of the AAAA are laid the principles of advertising practice. The code even specifically prohibits the use of imagery that could be regarded as offensive or indecent to the public. However it is left to the advertiser to decide what is decent or offensive and what is not (Wells et al., 2008).

c. Personal Ethics

There is no doubt that ethical decisions are complex. The code of ethics is purely a starting point for advertisers to make their determinations and navigate through a maze of morals and conflicting forces, strategy or ethics, cost versus ethics, effectiveness versus ethics. All the codes and guidelines are simply ways to aid personal decision-making.

Advertising professionals need to make personal judgements based on regulations, codes, guidelines and a personal sense of what is considered right and wrong (Wells et al., 2008).

There is nothing clear-cut about the issue of ethics in advertising. As O'Guinn (2009) describes a major area where the rules are not clear within advertising relating to emotional appeals. These have been, and still are, a point of debate with respect to truth in advertising. O'Guinn argues that it is impossible to legislate against emotional appeals, especially regarding beauty, prestige or the enhancing qualities of products, because these are unquantifiable. The challenge for all companies and advertising practitioners is to develop their own ethical standards and values against which they judge themselves and the actions of any organisation for which they may work.

What is ethically acceptable or not changes regularly within this context. Ethical is defined as being in accordance with the accepted principles of right and wrong that govern the conduct of advertising. Unacceptable can also be described as unsatisfactory (B. Moore, 2004). When adding these words back together within the context of shock advertising, ethically unacceptable develops the meaning of advertising not satisfactory being in accordance with general accepted principles of right and wrong.

Advertising ethics are an ever-evolving field and the changes in the advertising industry have been profound within the past decade. While advertising ethics has for some time been recognised as a mainstream topic, research into this is inconclusive in many important areas (Drumwright & Murphy, 2009).



### 2.5.2. Self-Regulation

The media environment has in the last decade become more tolerant of much stronger and controversial advertising content. "The taboos of old are quaint today" (Dzamic, November 2006). Despite campaigns that aim to be controversial, care needs to be taken to ensure that they are not racist, sexist, and do not contain anti-social behaviour or indecent language, particularly when targeted at a specific market. When advertising does offend, mislead or is untruthful, a structure should, in the view of Harker and Waller, be in place in order to provide protection to the consumer (Harker & Harker, 2000a; Waller, 1999). The system implemented to provide this protection for the consumer is the system of self-regulation, a controversial and difficult process.

The 1960s, with its challenges to traditional values and a certain amount of relaxation of racial and sexual taboos, paved the way for the introduction of advertising standards, with the central goal of protecting consumers from misinformation (ASA, 2008; Graham, 2008). Since then the system of advertising regulation has changed and developed into a co-regulated number of bodies and groups, which reflect the interests of government, media, industry, public, community groups and the competition. Given a choice, developed countries have usually selected a self-regulatory approach to deal with unacceptable advertising (Wells et al., 2008).

In most developed countries laws govern illegal practices or unacceptable advertising. Issues include truth, accuracy, misleading information, deception, fairness and consumer protection. The legal regulatory framework refers to the laws that have the primary focus to protect society against unacceptable advertising (Harker, 1998, 2004; "Self Regulation in Advertising," ; Wells et al., 2008). There are laws and regulations governing the practise of advertising, supplemented by codes of conduct and personal and professional decision-making guidelines (Wells et al., 2008). Their purpose is primarily to ensure fairness and ethical practice as well as to prohibit advertisers from misleading or deceiving the consumer. Each country has their own set of laws and regulations. In Australia it is the Fair Trading Act, as well as specific acts that include trade practices, copyright, broadcasting services, therapeutic goods, privacy, spam, consumer credit and tobacco prohibition.

Former Chairperson of the US Federal Trade Commission, Janet Steiger, said: "An agency that is involved in advertising and promoting a product is not free from responsibility for the content of the claims, whether they are expressed or implied. You will find the commission staff looking more closely at the extent of advertising involvement" (cited in Wells et al., 2008).

In many countries there is a resolve to hold not only the advertiser liable for untruthful advertising, but also the advertising agency. The agency has a responsibility and can be held liable. These laws are vital to advertisers and fair practice within the industry.

Never write an advertisement, which you wouldn't want your family to read. You wouldn't tell lies to your own wife. Don't tell them to mine. (Ogilvy)

However the law does not regulate all aspects of advertising. Whilst developed countries have various laws in place to handle untruthful advertising, they also have established programs of regulation that are often self-regulatory (Harker, 2004). Advertising self-regulation usually has a set of general principles and specific guidelines pertaining to all advertising or specific sectors, such as liquor, beverage, child protection and others. These are developed by advertisers, industry and trade associations over time. However, in many countries, this is as far as self-regulation goes (Boddewyn, 1992).

The system of self-regulation complements the legal regulatory framework, while the government or state formally hands over the power to the advertising industry, so that the industry itself is regulating. This way the business community is empowered to set its own standards and principles. Issues of taste and decency are dealt with as part of the industry's self-governance. It ensures consumer protection by providing a free and fast route for the individual consumer to express their views or complaints about advertising and have an impartial body judging these complaints (ASB, 2006d; Harker, 1998; Wells et al., 2008).

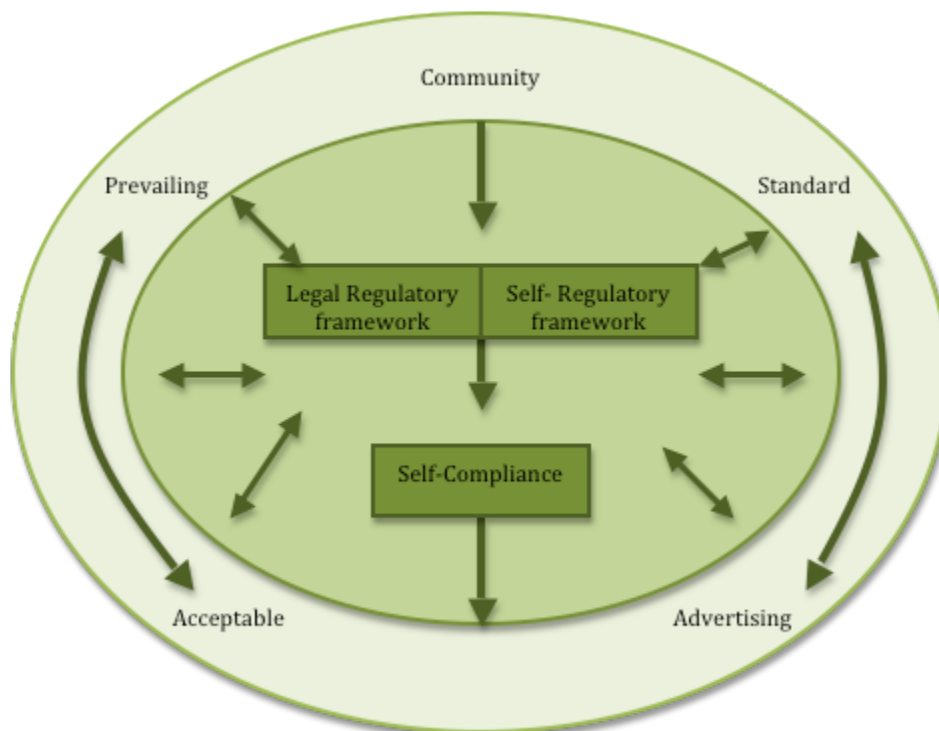
Since the mid-1930s, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) has played a key role in establishing common grounds for a base of national systems of marketing and advertising regulation. The first introduced specific principles, the International Code of Advertising Practice introduced in 1937, were revised in 1986. Courts in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany and Norway use the ICC International Code of Advertising Practice. The ICC recommends leaving Advertising Self-Regulation (ASR) structures to each country with voluntary or mixed bodies to handle marketing and advertising self-regulation, cooperation of business and consumer organisations and the fostering of participation by both in law making processes (Boddewyn, 1992).

In 1996 the breakdown of one of the world's longest established advertising self-regulatory systems in Australia highlighted the problems associated with providing effective protection for society from unacceptable advertising. During 1995 and 1996 the ACCC retracted the Media Council of Australia's (MCA) accreditation system for advertising agencies, because the benefit to the public from the system was insufficient to outweigh the associated anti-competitive drawbacks and effectively meant that the system of self-regulation in Australia had no means of enforcing decisions, as described by Harker (2000b). The MCA appeal in March 1996 was not successful and resulted in the system of advertising self-regulation in Australia having no "means of enforcing decisions". Furthermore in 1996 the ACCC announced a review of advertising standards in Australia including both the codes of conduct and the complaint handling body, the Advertising Standards Council (ASC). Shortly after their announcement at the end of 1996, the MCA ceased operation (Harker, 2004; Harker & Harker, 2000b; Harker, Harker, & Volkov, 2001).

The advertising industry has an obvious interest in maintaining self-governance, as businesses want to maintain confidence in commercial communication in general. If advertisements did not tend to be believed, it would result in money being wasted. As noted by John Manfredi: "When trust and confidence are gone, marketing and marketers suffer. Without trust, it's impossible to establish or retain a relationship with consumers and without trust bad things happen, not only in the marketplace, but also in the arena of public police and governance" ("Self-Regulation and Advertising: Surviving the global challenges ahead," 2009).

### 2.5.3. How does self-regulation work?

Figure II-4 shows that acceptable advertising is intended to function in the context of a legal and self-regulatory framework. This makes it easier to respond to prevailing community standards. As society evolves, so do the standards that are deemed acceptable. Fiona Jolly, CEO of the ASB suggests that “the beauty of self-regulation is that we can respond to community concerns - we don’t need to wait for government approval” (ASB, 21.8.2009). Since most advertisers wish to create brand loyalty, all parties need to stay alert to consumer sentiments. The acceptable advertising frameworks have been drawn in a circular fashion in an attempt to show the influence of each variable on the others (Harker, 1998; Wells et al., 2008).



**Figure II-4: Model of self-regulation (Harker, 1998; Wells et al., 2008)**

The ASR administers a national system of advertising self-regulation through Boards in self-regulated countries. These Boards have been established under the advertising industry’s self-regulation system, which recognises that advertisers share common interests in promoting consumer confidence and respect for general standards of advertising. With their authority resting on the industry’s voluntary compliance to self-determined standards, all Boards make their determinations under the appropriate section of the Advertising Code of Ethics

which mainly covers six particular areas: negative portrayal of people, violence, sex, concern for children, use of language and health and safety. The Boards' main purpose is to resolve complaints from the public and uphold the country's Code of Ethics (Adstandards, 2006; ASB, 2006c; Sindair, 2008; Wells et al., 2008).

"It has gone from having a very narrow brief, more often refusing to hear complaints simply because they did not fit into the terms of reference, to now having the ability to judge a wide range of consumer concerns" (Canning, 3.4.2008).

When advertisements break the Codes of Conduct established by the ASR, or are deemed unacceptable, action will follow, which could lead to advertisements being redesigned or completely taken off air depending on the degree of violation against the Codes of Conduct. Industry compliance is vitally essential to the voluntary system "else the program will be accused of impotence" (Harker & Wiggs, 2000). Compliance is usually achieved through sanctions such as prosecution under law, in the most extreme cases, and financial incentives to comply with rulings from charter bodies. The Boards can only make recommendations to the company when their advertisement has violated the Codes of Conduct. They do not have the power to sanction advertisers or remove offending advertisements. However this can differ from country to country. Where the Board upholds any complaints and deems an advertisement as being offensive, the advertiser is given a period in which the advertisement has to be modified or discontinued. In the case that the advertiser chooses not to comply with the ASB's recommendation, the Board may forward its case report to appropriate government agencies and media proprietors (ASB, 2010c; Burrows, 2009; Harker & Wiggs, 2000; Sindair, 2008; "Taking the rational approach to humanity's baser instincts," 2007).

Volkov et. al. (2005) claims that "once a complaint has been upheld, discontinuation of the advertisement in question is virtually certain". The ASB assures that there is a 100 per cent industry compliance with Board determination: advertisers either modify or withdraw the advertising campaign in response to the ruling (Volkov et al., 2005). According to Graham (2008) tough sanctions of fining advertisers who breach the rules would only serve to delay

investigations. Companies are already “hit where it hurts them the most” by a loss of sales and drop in share price, followed by a possible ban.

All regulations in Australia have counterparts in other nations (Anderson, 2005). The system relies on responsible advertisers to take the initiative to establish individual ethical standards that attempt to anticipate possible complaints (Wells et al., 2008). However, prevailing community standards in an ASR system are usually achieved by involving the public in the complaint handling process, which is believed to lead to increased effectiveness of the program (Harker, 1998).

#### **2.5.4. Comparison of advertising regulation in various countries**

The following countries were selected because of advertising campaigns that have created a great deal of controversy there, to allow for direct comparability. Additionally they all have a system of self-regulation, the effectiveness of which differs from country to country, begging the question of why this is. The countries selected are all Western countries. To consider complex topics such as censorship in Asian countries would have been too difficult within the limited time available.

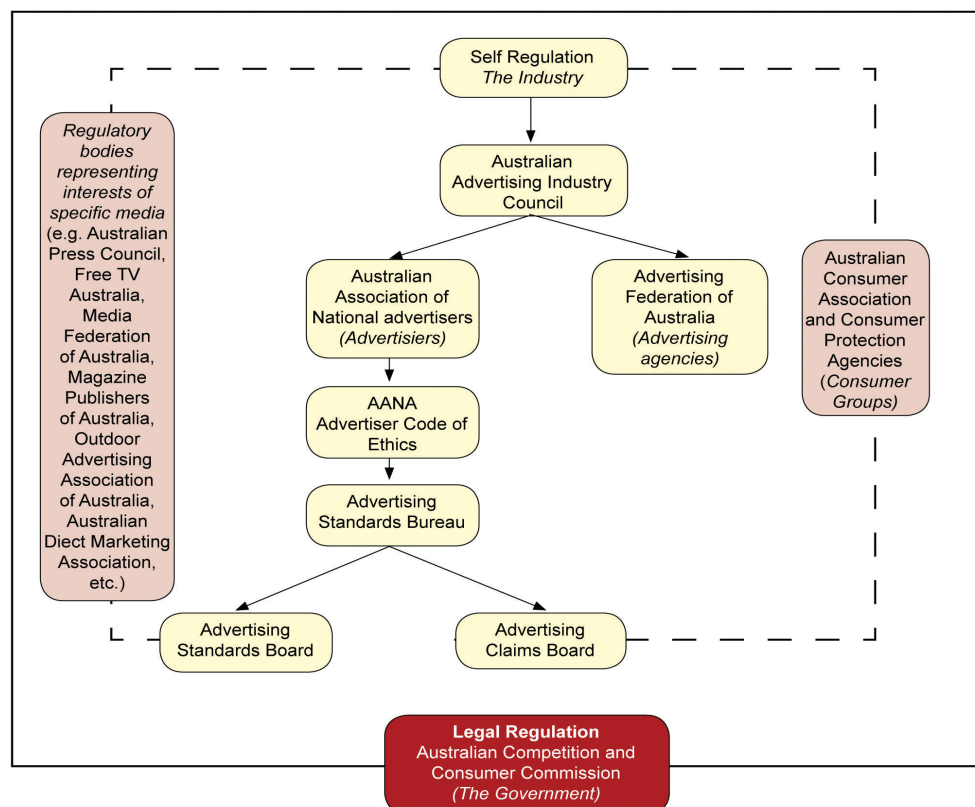
##### **2.5.4.1. Australia**

The current system of self-regulation governing advertising standards in Australia commenced operation in 1998. The Advertising Standards Board (ASB) and the Advertising Claims Board (ACB) were created to deal with complaints regarding the content of advertisements. This new system of self-regulation was introduced to replace the old system that was terminated on 31 December 1996 due to the dissolution of the Media Council of Australia (MCA) including the existing advertising codes and regulations. The new system of self-regulation was the result of a lengthy period of consultation between advertising, government and consumer representatives (ASB, 2006c; Harker et al., 2001; "Self Regulation in Advertising,").

The Federal Government established the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) in 1995. The ACCC has the task of being an overall industry competition watchdog. It is the primary agency governing the

advertising industry's adherence to the law, especially to anti-competitive practises and deceptive and misleading conduct. Its main focus is to identify and eliminate advertisements that deceive or mislead consumers. The Fair Trading Act is to provide the standards for ethical practice within each State. The Fair Trading Act includes trade practices, copyright, broadcasting services, therapeutic goods, privacy, spam, commercial credit and tobacco prohibition (Harker, 1998, 2004; "Self Regulation in Advertising," ; Wells et al., 2008).

The self-regulatory framework refers to the input from various Advertising Self-Regulation (ASR) bodies involved in the country's control process and the performance of the dispute resolution (Harker, 1998; Wells et al., 2008), see Figure II-5.



**Figure II-5: System of Self-Regulation (Wells et al., 2008)**

Advertising in Australia is co-regulated by a number of bodies and groups that reflect the interests of government, media, industry, public and community groups and the competitors (ASB, 2006d; Harker, 1998; Wells et al., 2008).

To lodge a complaint about a possible breach of the Codes of Conduct consumers or industry need to write to the ASB outlining their concerns. The ASB Board assesses the complaint and allows the advertiser to comment on the apparent breach before any decision is made. Should the complaint be upheld the advertiser is invited to withdraw or modify the subject advertisement. The advertiser is given the possibility of a statement that is included in the Case Report that is prepared for immediate publication. In contrast, if the advertiser does not modify or discontinue the advertisement under review, the Board may forward the case report to the appropriate government agency and media (Harker, 1998; ICAP, 2001; Wells et al., 2008).

The ASB seeks to maintain high standards in all forms of advertising. The ASB considers written complaints about advertising in mainstream media using the AANA Code of Ethics (ASB, 2006b). They additionally administer the AANA Code for Advertising to Children, the AANA Foods and Beverages Advertising Marketing Communication Code, Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries and the Alcohol and Beverages Advertising Codes (Adstandards, 2007). The Australian advertising self-regulatory system is managed by the ASB and funded by the industry through the Australian Advertising Standards Council (ASB, 2006d). The ASB members are appointed on the basis of their involvement in the community and professional expertise in relevant areas (ASB, 2006b). The ASB supplies a free public service of complaint resolution. It provides determination on complaints about most forms of advertising in relation to issues including: language, discrimination, concern for children, violence, sex, nudity, health and safety, each year adding new elements to its operations (Adstandards, 2006; Canning, 3.4.2008). Abernathy from the ASB described its role as “walk[ing] the line between advertisers being able to advertise their product and the community not being offended” (Bridges, 2008). The ASB represents a broad range of people of different ages, gender, and cultural and personal backgrounds. It comprises 16 members (ASB, 2008b).

The ACB provides an additional competitive complaint resolution service, designed to determine complaints involving issues of truth, accuracy and legality of advertising. Its objectives are to provide a system of alternative dispute resolution to address and resolve challenges to advertising that might otherwise lead to litigation (Adstandards, 2006; ASB, 2006a).



Since its establishment in 1997, the ASB has been funded by the voluntary levy system. It does not receive supplements from the government. The levy has been set at 0,035% or just \$3.50 per \$10,000 of gross media expenditure on advertising, with all levy monies applied exclusively to activities necessary for the maintenance of self-regulation. The Australian Advertising Standards Council (AASC) administers the levy system, which underpins self-regulation of the advertising industry in Australia. Advertisers demonstrate their support to the system by paying the levy on media invoices, having the amounts remitted to the AASC on their behalf (ASB, 2010a, 2010b; Jolly, 2008).

The system of self-regulation additionally plays an important role in educating, not only the industry, but also the consumer in preventing breaches of the Code of Conduct. This enables brands to compete on a level playing field to the benefit of the consumer (ASB, 2006d). The ASB released a public education and awareness campaign in 2008 to educate the consumer about the ASB and create more awareness among the public, informing them that they do not have to accept advertising that they feel is offensive or provocative. The strategic objectives plan by the ASB was to position itself as the foremost body for self-regulation of advertising in Australia, provide a best practice complaints resolution service, raise and maintain the profile of the ASB, ensure a robust and respected decision making body and effective outcomes of the self-regulatory system (ref ASB 2008, 2009).

Advertisers, agency and media have a personal interest in stopping irresponsible players damaging trust in advertisements (Graham, 2008). In 2008 self-regulation dominated the Australian industry as major advertisers had founded the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) in the 1940s. Their interest in protecting freedom of commercial speech has motivated initiatives to set standards of practice and a process for corrective action for advertising that the public finds irresponsible or offensive (Wells et al., 2008).

#### 2.5.4.2. The United Kingdom

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is the UK's watchdog administering the advertising industry's system of self-regulation, keeping advertisements "legal, decent, honest and truthful". The ASA is wholly independent in its actions and functions. Its mission is to apply the advertising codes of conduct and uphold standards in all media on behalf of consumers, business and society at large. The ASA Council is a jury deciding whether advertisements have breached the Advertising Codes of Conduct. This Council is made up of two panels, broadcast and non-broadcast. Non-broadcast are advertisements in media such as cinema, press, posters and online. The ASA checks advertisements that are published without receiving complaints, especially in relation to issues of food, safety and children. Being an independent body that investigates, challenges and adjudicates upon potential breaches of advertising codes, it keeps advertising standards high in the UK. The ASA is funded by the industry through a levy of 0.1 percent of billings, which contributes more than £8 million to the ASA and employs more than 100 people. The ASA council's members are expected to act as individuals exercising a moral authority rather than as representatives of any particular industry or interest. The procedures and operations are guided by the principles of transparent proportionate and targeted regulation. (ASA, 2008, 2010; Boddewyn, 1992; Graham, 2008).

The ASA's decisions are transparent as clear signals about what is and what is not acceptable in advertising across a wide range of sectors. As a result of their work the vast majority of advertisements that can be seen are legal, decent, honest and truthful (ASA, 2010). The strength of the self-regulatory system lies not only in the independence of the ASA but the support and commitment of the advertising industry, through the Committee of Advertising Practice (ICAP). The advertising industry, CAP and the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP) are responsible for writing the advertising codes of conduct. The CAP is responsible for the "rulebook". These rules include print and press advertising, posters, direct mail, television and radio advertisements, competitions, special offers, email and text messages, internet, teleshopping, cinema commercials and promotions. They further offer an extensive range of training and guidance services to advertisers helping them to abide by those rules. The UK Code of

Non-broadcast Advertising additionally includes Sales Promotions and Direct Marketing (ASA, 2010; Practice, 2012).

#### 2.5.4.3. The United States

In 1971 the National Advertising Division (NAD) of the Council of Better Business (CBBB) and the National Advertising Review Board (NARB), was formed as a central mechanism, in the voluntary system of self-regulation as a result of increased government control, concern by consumer groups, politicians and growing consumerism. Today the objective remains to promote the highest standards of truth and accuracy in advertising within the US. It ensures that the marketplace is not corrupt and that consumers can make informed purchasing decisions (Boddewyn, 1992; NAD, 2010).

The NARB is the umbrella organisation for several organisations including the NAD. The NAD's mission is to review national advertising for truthfulness and accuracy and foster public confidence and the credibility of national advertising. National advertisers, who provide ongoing financial support to the advertising self-regulation programmes of the CBBB, funded the NAD. Since 2001 this financial support has been supplemented through filing fees when entering a challenge (NAD, 2010; NARB, 2010).

The NAD is used as a unique alternative for dispute resolution between companies. The industry utilises the NAD as a forum to resolve disputes to ensure that there is a level playing field, and that the industry follows the same rules and guidelines. The division works closely with in-house counsel, marketing executives, research and development departments and outside consultants to decide whether claims can be substantiated. The division not only considers advertising about which they have received complaints, but review advertising themselves, particularly product categories such as dietary supplements, in which there is a large amount of misleading messages. The NAD process is open to all members of the advertising industry; however, it is competitors rather than consumers which file the most complaints. However, NAD self-regulation has the primary focus of accuracy and truth within advertising. They are less concerned about decency (Mallen, 2010; NAD, 2010; NARB, 2010).

#### 2.5.4.4. Germany

The nationwide organisation Zentralsausschuss der Werbewirtschaft (ZAW), the Central Council for Advertising, is the authority for administering the system of self-regulation in Germany. It was founded in 1949 and is a voluntary association from all fields of advertising. The Deutscher Werberat (German Advertising Council) is the self-regulatory body of the ZAW. It is an institution consisting of 40 representatives from advertising companies, media, agencies and research & development. The Werberat's General Assembly is elected every three years and consists of ten members who make decisions regarding complaints received by companies or consumers. The members are elected from advertising agencies within three areas of the media (Boddewyn, 1992; Werberat, 2010).

In Germany advertising is subject to laws and voluntarily established boundaries. Commercial communication has to acknowledge the general values of society, decency and morals, which are controlled by the system of self-regulation. In particular advertising has to be truthful, fair and responsible and this is regulated by law (Werberat, 2010).

The Advertising Council will consider advertisements after receiving complaints from the consumer or competitors. The accused company is allowed a statement explaining their actions. In cases where the Werberat has objections towards the advertisement, the company that has been the subject of the complaints is asked to change or withdraw its advertisement (Werberat, 2010).

In 2008 complaints against 399 advertising campaigns were handed to the German Advertising Council, similar to the number of complaints for 2007. Laws and regulations covered a third of the complaints, while The Advertising Council judged 264 advertisements. In 88 cases they decided for the claimant and the companies changed or cancelled their advertisements. There were 176 complaints were dismissed, as these were unsubstantiated. Only six advertisements received an official reproval (Werberat, 2010).

### 2.5.5. Statistics of advertising complaints

Figures of complaints are necessary to understand the relationship of shock advertising and the system of self-regulation, and help to answer the question of who complains and why they complain.

In research it has been suggested that the more money spent on advertising the greater the need for protection of unacceptable, unethical advertising (Volkov et al., 2005). Both the Australian advertising industry and the global industry validate the economic and social imperative for a control over the consequences of “unethical” advertising, and the need for a functioning self-regulatory system.

In Australia during 2009 the number of complaints rose in comparison to the previous year, as well as the number of advertisements complained about (Jolly, 2008). In 2009 the ASB received complaints about more than 600 advertisements from all mediums, of which the Board determined 80 breaches of the AANA Code of Ethics (Jolly, 2008). These numbers, however, represent less than 1% of Australians making complaints. Research examining consumer dissatisfaction and complaint-behaviour has found that up to two-thirds of dissatisfied customers take no action against advertising campaigns they find unethical or shocking. Complaints about advertisements in Australia mainly relate to television commercials and outdoor advertising as these have the most public exposure (Jolly, 2008; Volkov et al., 2005).

Outcome of Complaints (No., by complaint)	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Dismissed	927	1553	1971	1291	1191	1990	1349	1753	2648	1730	1818
Upheld	73	111	162	47	11	23	55	94	164	280	446
Withdrawn before board decision	0	0	0	0	16	113	236	139	20	15	59
Outside Charter	392	401	425	367	354	714	656	975	1169	565	99
<b>Total</b>	<b>1392</b>	<b>2065</b>	<b>2558</b>	<b>2558</b>	<b>1572</b>	<b>2620</b>	<b>2296</b>	<b>2943</b>	<b>4001</b>	<b>2590</b>	<b>2422</b>

Figure II-6: Outcome of Complaints (ASB, 2008)

As Figure II-6 shows, approximately 2400 people complained about unacceptable advertising in 2008, whilst there was a peak of complaints in 2006. Comparing the number of complaints to the population in Australia (estimated at 22.1 million in 2010) shows that complaints represent 0.001% of the Australian population.

Issues Attracting Complaints (%)	2005	2006	2007	2008
AANA Section 2.3-Sex, sexuality and nudity	26.49%	22.23%	37.91%	25.66%
AANA Section 2.1 - Discrimination or vilification	27.13%	23.25%	28.05%	22.85%
AANA Section 2.2 - Violence	17.39%	18.01%	8.42%	17.88%
Other	14.59%	14.69%	4.86%	15.88%
AANA Section 2.5 - Language	4.36%	7.55%	1.68%	7.26%
AANA Section 2.6 - Health and Safety	6.46%	9.70%	10.85%	6.06%
AANA Section 2.7 / FCAI Code	3.38%	1.84%	4.91%	3.08%
AANA Section 2.4 / Advertising to Children Code	0.20%	2.73%	2.95%	0.74%
Food and Beverage Code	0.00%	0.00%	0.37%	0.60%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Figure II-7: Issues attracting Complaints (ASB 2008)

Board Determinations (No., by Advertisement)	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Withdrawn before board determination	0	0	0	0	6	5	10	33	13	5	12
Upheld	5	11	8	6	3	4	8	14	28	36	60
Dismissed	262	434	284	363	291	401	337	344	488	405	475
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>445</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>365</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>547</b>

Figure II-8: Board Determinations (ASB 2008)

Figure II-7 demonstrates that there was a shift in 2007 from complaints about discrimination; sex, sexuality and nudity became the issues attracting the most complaints.

Who actually complains? It is interesting to discover that complaints are much more likely to be made by consumers with a higher income, higher level of education, who work within a professional occupation, are older and more likely, female professionals. Non-complainants are inclined to be young, low income or unemployed people. This shows that the consumers that who are complaining are usually not harmed by the unacceptable advertising due to their social background (ASB, 2008a; Volkov et al., 2005).



**Image II-8: Advanced Medical Institute (AMI) Advertising Campaign, Want longer lasting sex? ("Longer Lasting Sex billboards sexualise children and are confronting to Australians," 2008)**

After already featuring in the ASB's ten most complained about advertisements three times, the Advanced Medical Institute (Dzamic) made the list again with its "Making Love - Do it Longer" and "Men do it LONGER" campaigns of 2009. All complaints against the advertising campaigns have been dismissed. The AMI's advertising campaign Image II-8 "Want longer lasting sex?" was removed only when the ACCC stepped in, after the complaints were dismissed by the ASB in 2007 and 2008 (Jolly, 2008).

The ASB endorse that "community safety advertising occasionally needs to be hard-hitting to ensure the importance of the message has an impact on the public" (ASB, 2007). However, what is regarded as community safety advertising and where does the line need to be drawn? The intervention of the ACCC has dramatically undermined self-regulation, as it has interfered with the self-regulatory process demonstrating that the system is not working as effectively as it should and that there are gaps within the system. . These gaps allow some questionable advertising campaigns to slip through into mainstream media, even though they should be reviewed by the ASB. Intervention was necessary in this case, however, no measures were taken and the ACCC had to undermine the ASB's authority to rectify the situation.

The ASB has demonstrated that there are a lack of indication as to when and where guidelines need to be in place and when they can be pushed for "community safety". While deploring that it is insufficiently developed in much of the world, one must acknowledge that the same is generally true for governmental regulation (Boddewyn, 1992).

### **2.5.6. Gaps and discrepancies arising within the literature**

When comparing the literature on self-regulation, unanswered questions arise. The effectiveness of the advertising self-regulatory system has been debated in leading academic journals for more than 20 years (Harker & Harker, 2000a). Critics have accused the system of being ineffective and having mixed performances in its operations and decisions, a lack of independence and social responsibility. At times it has been revealed as a “toothless tiger”, slow and possibly obtuse in its reviews of advertisements’ effects on the consumer. The Boards have not always gotten it right, either in the eyes of the consumer or the eyes of the advertisers (Alliance, 2007; Biener, Wakefield, Shiner, & Siegel, 2008; Canning, 3.4.2008; Graham, 2008).

The literature is very clear that effective self-regulation has distinct advantages over a statutory regime. Self-regulation is always an option when seeking the least costly, most effective, most appropriate, quick and sufficient legitimate response to public policy invention, especially at the EU level, suggests Adstandards (Adstandards, 2006; Graham, 2008). In working together to keep advertising standards high, practitioners hope to retain the freedom to advertise responsibly and avoid further restriction and bans which would be imposed if the industry could not self-regulate effectively.

The system remains far from perfect, but its existence has managed to stop the government regulating the industry (Gajda; Graham, 2008). The research implies that continuing with a system that has its problems in complying with current rules is still the better and more cost-effective option than spending money and time on a new system (Blumenthal, 2007).

“I believe effective self-regulation is the best way of ensuring that advertising does not mislead, cause harm, or give serious or widespread offence. It stands for social responsibility in advertising. It can and will adapt to remain fit for purpose in the digital age – delivering consumers protection and fair competition” (Graham, 2008).



Much of the controversy that focuses on advertising regulation, media and products stems from the ways many companies use advertising as a selling tool and its impact on society's tastes, values and lifestyles (Blech and Blech 1998, cited in Phan & Prendergast, 2001). This is largely due to the escalating complexity of society as advertising agencies attempt to "cut through the clutter" to gain awareness for their products (Lynn 1996 cited in Phan & Prendergast, 2001). However, the "harm on society caused by shock advertising continually conflicts with corporations' arguments for their expanding empire of images on the basis of private property and free speech", (Bryan-Wilson, 2008). Advertising has become a platform for testing conflicts within nations (Bryan-Wilson, 2008). The quantity and variety of products and services vying for consumer attention pose challenges to the self-regulatory system, which needs to be responsive to develop with the growth of consumerism (Wells et al., 2008).

Many researchers seem to assume that consumers are likely to pressure advertising companies to change their advertisements when the consumer thinks that these have gone too far, or that the media will stop accepting them when they think that the advertisers have gone too far (Phan & Prendergast, 2001; Waller, 1999). However, if this is the case, why do advertisements and consumer acceptance not change? In the 1980s, people boycotted Benetton in reaction to its provocative advertising campaigns. There was outrage, and people made their voices heard. Are consumers not raising their voices or just not being heard today? Advertising is and can be a "mirror of society" and this equally applies to the system of self-regulation (Boddewyn, 1992). So where is society, and thus advertising, heading?

These are complex questions with no simple answers. According to research, consumers hold the power regarding advertising they accept and advertising they do not; they just need to make their voices heard. Who is complaining and boycotting also needs to be considered. How important is the protest from consumers that are not the target audience?

It is ironic that the system set up for people to complain about advertising publicises itself very little in most countries, forcing the ASB of Australia to launch a public education plan (ASB, 2008a; Boddewyn, 1992; Canning, 3.4.2008). "This year we launched a public education campaign to highlight to people that there is somewhere they can raise their concerns about any advertising." Since

the launch, the number of complaints to the ASB have continued to climb”: F. Jolly, CEO of ASB (2008). To achieve an effective ASR system “the creation of public awareness” is vital (Harker, 2004). Reviewing the most complained about advertisements in 2008 and over the following years, it is interesting to note that complaints fluctuate and very little is done about complaints. This is particularly noticeable with companies that have repeatedly created campaigns attracting public complaints that were not upheld. There are major gaps in the system, especially when the ACCC had to step in and ban an advertising campaign, such as the Advanced Medical Institute “Men do it longer” campaign, because the ASB did not, even though it made the top ten of the most complained about advertisements. If most ads complained about are defended and complaints are not taken seriously, is there any point in complaining? Many decisions of the ASB come “too late” after infringing advertisements have been discontinued. If the system is working well, why are critics complaining? Why are the advertisements with most complaints not being dismissed by the ASB, but instead the complaints are being dismissed? Who is to judge which advertisement is acceptable or socially responsible? Does the ASB not have a moral obligation to the consumer (ASB, 2008a; Boddewyn, 1992; Canning, 10.6.2008). There seem to be clear discrepancies within the system of self-regulation, which raise the issue of whether it can be objectively judged. These are questions that need to be further investigated and will be looked at within the discussion section.

“Advertising self-regulation will never fully satisfy consumerists and regulators. They simply refuse to believe that private interests can be turned into promoters of the public interest” (Boddewyn, 1992).

Generally one might be able to say that the system of self-regulation may be sufficient for big advertisers and major brands for fear of embarrassment, but those seeking notoriety and controversy can do so seemingly without facing any consequences. “It is not as if the ASB levies fines or any other tangible penalty” (Burrows, 2009). The ASR is more concerned with improving advertising behaviour and education on an industry basis, rather than additionally solving individual complaints, even though one does not eliminate the other (Boddewyn, 1992). Tim Burrows notes “how toothless the watchdogs are when it comes to maverick advertisers”.

Mike Hughes, the chief of Britain's advertising body, states "in the UK we'll put an ad off air if it doesn't comply with the rules. Those sorts of teeth are needed to make sure [the system of self-regulation] has credibility". This comment highlights the weakness in Australia's system, as it is based on voluntary compliance (Sindair, 2008).

### **2.5.7. Summary**

Chapter II has provided the background information to shock advertising, establishing its development and an understanding of shock advertising from the perspective of the literature. The three main aspects were explained in detail: what is the definition of shock advertising, consumer effects and self-regulation. The system of self-regulation in Australia was explained and compared with the countries that the research interviewees are from, to allow direct comparison. The current debates have reviewed issues of concern in the literature.

## *Chapter III*

# **Research Methodology and Design**

## **3 Research Methods**

What is the problem, thought process and the purpose of this investigation? This section will answer these questions, allowing insight into the concept of this research.

### **3.1 Problem Statement**

The core problem within this research has developed from the idea of a conflict between advertising practices and the literature. Research indicates that there are gaps and discrepancies arising between theory and reality. This includes a lack of definition of shock advertising from an advertisers point of view, as well as gaps and discrepancies arising in the self-regulation of advertising. There is a large amount of consumer research available, as it is important for the advertiser to understand the consumer and therefore design effective advertising campaigns. However, what does the advertiser think and what is their point of view?

Shock advertising is defined within the literature as confrontational, provocative and offensive to cultures, societies and individuals. However, after conducting interviews and further research, this term seemed to be a media construct for more sensationalism, publicity and exposure in advertising. The theory or literature definition is based on what the media has constructed to define shock advertising. This raises the question: what does the advertiser think about shock advertising? Advertisers create these advertisements, so how do they define them? Do they intend to offend cultures, societies or individuals, or is it all about publicity?

Advertising has grown and become ubiquitous. Most consumers have developed the knack to be more resilient towards many types of advertisements, so for the advertiser, shock advertising is a way of cutting through the clutter. The need to do this raises other questions about shock advertising. What does the consumer think about it? The consumer has been well researched, but there nonetheless seems to be a certain amount that is unknown about shock advertising. This leads to the problem of self-regulation. Consumers seem to have a degree of indifference towards these issues: if they do not complain and act how can the system of self-regulation work? These problems directly relate to shock advertising, adding to the gap between theory and reality forming a kind of vicious circle.

### 3.2 Purpose of Investigation

Consumers and their surroundings are inundated with advertising messages, whether it is on the internet, television, radio or even kitchen appliances. Everything is advertising a product, service or brand and is in the public eye. Shock advertising is not always directly in the public eye; however, media coverage regarding controversial advertisements assists these advertisements to gain publicity. This has the effect of accentuating shock advertising in the public domain. The amount of exposure that shock advertising has may be argued as a good or a bad influence on the consumer. It can further be questioned whether it is just a strategy to gain publicity.

The purpose of this investigation is not to judge shock advertising or the use of shock advertising, but to create a better understanding of what shock advertising is from the point of view of the advertiser. This will allow discussing their views and motivations. These views are expected to vary from the theory within the literature. Allowing this new insight into shock advertising will contribute to current debates. Further, this research can open a discussion between the advertising industry and leading academics.

The investigation will also raise awareness and understanding of the system of self-regulation, allowing the consumer to gain knowledge and a more educated opinion on options towards advertising.

### 3.3 Methodology

Phenomenology describes the meaning for several individuals about their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon. Creswell (2007) describes the approach as a focus on what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon. Its basic purpose is to reduce individual experiences to a description of the universal essence. The phenomenon can be a human experience such as anger, insomnia, or grief according to Creswell. Data is collected from the people who have experienced the phenomenon developing a combined description of the essence of the experience from the individuals. Moustakas (1994, cited in Creswell, 2007) says that the description consists of “what” they experienced and “how” they experienced it.

The phenomenological methodology within this research will provide deep understanding of the phenomenon experienced by several individuals who are advertising professionals covering a range of different areas within advertising, from copywriting to strategic planning. These commonalities and discrepancies will assist in identifying gaps as well as in creating new ideas and definitions.

### 3.4 Qualitative Research Strategy

For this research a qualitative research strategy was applied. Shank describes this as the study of process and behaviours of people in their natural settings. The researcher then makes sense of phenomena and the meanings that people attribute to them. This puts the focus of qualitative research and analysis on the understanding and interpretation of a phenomenon into its social, political, economic and organisational context. A variety of methods are used to interpret and understand the world, offering multiple perspectives that add to the understanding of its operations and meanings. These methods can include observation, conversation, interview, participant or archival research. Qualitative analysis encompasses complexity, uncertainty, context and rich descriptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Shank, 2002).

Qualitative research facilitates opportunities for researchers to encounter and interact with people in naturally occurring events and situations, allowing data collection directly from a scene of action, and through considering the context in

any investigation. The primary goal for a qualitative research method is insight, deep level, contextually informed understanding. Further, it permits recognition and the appreciation of diversity, difference and uniqueness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This strategy requires direct and personal engagement by the researcher with the field, its actors and archives, engaging in new complexities through interaction.

For this research in particular, qualitative research allowed the direct and personal interaction with the advertising industry, with a deep level insight into the processes and opinions of advertising professionals. Furthermore it allowed the gathering of extensive narrative data, which enabled direct comparison, through the different methods selected of textual analysis, interviews and case studies.

## **4 Description of Research Design**

This section will discuss how the research was conducted, outlining the research philosophy, the preparation of the research and its approach. It will explain the procedure about how the literature was collected, evaluated and consequently, how the interviews were conducted. It will further establish the credibility of the samples selected as well as how the research design was implemented.

### **4.1 Research Procedure**

This first part of the research design will describe how the research was approached, including an explanation of the triangulation used and each part of the triangulation, including literature, interviews and case studies. Other aspects for consideration, such as validity and ethics, will also be explained and justified.

#### **4.1.1. Approach**

Qualitative research investigates naturally occurring phenomena in all its complexity, rather than clarifying phenomena through carefully designed and controlled data collection and analysis (Mooij, 2010).

In this thesis the phenomenological approach was used in the qualitative research. Fraenkel and Wallen (2008) described the approach to qualitative research within a narrative as the study of life experiences of an individual. This allows the research to draw on the depth of instruments offered. It provides an insight into what people are doing in their natural context, culture, time and place, allowing the researcher to study meanings as well as causes (Creswell, 2007; Silverman, 2008). Once the research is conducted the analysis of the participants' "stories" are put into a general type of framework. This framework consists of the key elements of the topics to be researched. New topics and questions make the framework more complex and interesting, adding to the depth of the approach.



For this research the approach of a three-step process was undertaken, displayed in Figure III-1, where each section builds the foundation for the next section, while still working interactively.



**Figure III-1: Cyclic Model of Research Procedure**

This Figure III-1 demonstrates that while moving forward within each section one still needs to go back to review, creating a cyclic process. The approach taken is a mixture of qualitative research using triangulation through textual analysis, interviews and case studies. Triangulation usually refers to combining multiple theories, methods and observers, and is a way of cross checking data using multiple data sources or multiple data-collection procedures (Mooij, 2010; Silverman, 2008). This thesis combines several methods to add to the validity and interest of the research. Silverman (2008) notes that if the findings obtained with the methods within triangulation are in correspondence with each other and draw the same or similar conclusions, the validity of those findings and conclusions has been established. Norman Denzin (1970, cited in Silverman, 2008) is an early advocate for the method of triangulation, suggesting that it can serve to overcome partial variables and present something like a complete picture.

The idea of triangulation of literature analysis, interviews and case studies was developed through the ideas of these theorists, Denzin and Silverman. Their thoughts and reasoning were most appropriate for this course of research.

Additionally, “by looking at it from more than one standpoint it is possible to produce a more true and certain representation of the object” (Silverman, 2008). However, opposing opinions can construct an interesting discussion and open up new questions and theories.

The interviews and literature analysis establish information by answering questions as well as raising new ones, which can possibly be further answered within the case studies. The case studies are used as examples to verify or disagree with the information previously collected. The use of three different methods not only supports the validity of this research, but shows the topic from different perspectives and sets the findings in relationship to shock advertising. The case studies will additionally display different techniques of the use of threat, confrontation and provocation within shock advertising.

#### **4.1.2. Literature Analysis**

The literature analysis is based on the basic ideas of textual analysis, originally defined as “the identification, examination and evaluation of various techniques and tools used by the creator of a text” (Huehls, 2010). It is more about the content rather than the structure of communication, including thematic and symbolic elements to determine the objective or meaning of the piece of communication. Further a textual analysis is about deciding how strong arguments are presented and how the techniques used achieve the authors intended purpose. It is about critical thought on how texts work and communicate (Huehls, 2010; Kotler et al., 2006; O'Shaugnessy & Stadler, 2008).

However this thesis takes a slightly different approach to textual analysis to make it more efficient. A foundation was established for the interviews as well as the framework for the analysis of the interviews, an accepted method of textual investigation, particularly in the field of mass communication according to Silverman (2008).

Silverman's (2008) idea of textual analysis is to understand participants' "categories", in terms of a researcher's categories. Written material needs to be analysed in a way that will produce reliable evidence to establish categories and the number of instances that fall into each category. However for this research establishing the categories will be sufficient.

Although the information collected through textual analysis is of a factual nature, without perspective it is not very helpful. Perspective needs to be added to the information, and this can be done through comparison with the literature and the interviews conducted (Berger, 2000). The comparative approach adds to gain new perspective and establish new categories after the first round of interviews.

The textual analysis builds the foundation for the interviews. The creation of categories, or topics for discussion emerges from the textual analysis based on the literature. For this thesis the focus is on segments within shock advertising, the idea of social advertising, discrepancies within shock advertising including its context, self-regulation and consumer perception, and the effectiveness of shock advertising.

#### **4.1.3. Interviews**

Interviews were the appropriate way to check accuracy of already gathered information, as well as collecting new data, especially to collect opinions, expertise and knowledge from advertising professionals.

A great deal of in-depth preparation was done before each interview, to make sure that the interviewer and the interviewee were on a similar knowledge basis. The preparation included detailed background information of the companies and the people interviewed, as well as the campaigns they had previously designed. This information was first gathered to assure the value to the research. Once the interview was confirmed, more precise information was collected to prepare for each individual interview.

An outline of questions and topics was sent to each professional (see examples in Appendices). The interview format chosen was informal and semi-structured. This had the advantage of resembling a casual conversation following the interests of both the researcher and the respondent. The primary intent was to

find out what people were thinking and how those views compared. The questions can be viewed in the Appendix.

The interviewees were put at ease by establishing an atmosphere of trust and cooperation. Conducting the interviews in the location of the individual's offices assisted this. Additionally, the first questions were about the professional background of the interviewee to establish their credibility. Any queries the participants had about the research were answered, to provide information on what they were participating in. The second set of questions was specifically worded to make the evaluation and comparison easier.

As the relevance of certain questions changed, depending on the individual's position and their personal background, it was necessary to use open-ended questions for the third set. This third set of questions was developed during the interview process, allowing for the closing of anticipated logical gaps within the data collected. It additionally gave the interviewee the opportunity to expand on their experiences and for their view on the topics to be investigated in more depth. The interview was matched to the individuals and their circumstances. High flexibility, however, can limit the comparability of the different responses (Berger, 2000; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Silverman, 2008).

It is to mention that several interviews, which include Christian Fischer, Florian Schwalme, Henning Mayer, and Rolf Zimmermann were conducted in German. These were transcribed in German and paragraphs translated as needed.

To avoid any ethical dilemmas, the questions were purely based on the professional expertise of the interviewee. This will be explained in more depth later within this chapter. All interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed.

#### **4.1.4. Case Studies**

Case studies are used as a specific instance that are frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle (Cohen et al., 2007).

For this research, the case studies provide insight into previous advertising campaigns to establish the diversity of the use of shock advertising and the

presentation of ideas within the advertising campaigns. In this way the cause and effect of shock advertising can be established. The strength of case studies is that they observe the effects in a real context, recognising that context is a determinant of both causes and effects (Cohen et al., 2007; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008). Generalisations can be made through the combination of data gathered within the textual analysis and interviews.

#### 4.1.4.1. Why these Case Studies?

The initial reading and interviews with advertising professionals showed a great tendency for shock advertising to be used within the area of fashion, anti-smoking and anti-drugs campaigns, perfumes and food and beverage advertising (ASB, 2008c including conducted interviews and examples mentioned). For this reason the most appropriate examples were from social advertising campaigns and fashion advertisements.

Diesel and Calvin Klein represent the fashion brands. They are both classic advertising examples that push the boundaries. Both these brands are known for designing controversial advertisements in the public domain, pushing the issues of sex in advertising and public spaces. However, they both have a different approach, which is defined by their target market. This will become clear when the case studies have been analysed in detail.

When talking about controversial advertisements that push the boundaries of what is socially acceptable, an example that comes to most minds is Benetton. In this research I have decided not to use Benetton as a case study as it has already been discussed in great detail. Benetton's great years of shock advertising were in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The advertising campaigns selected are more recent. However, Benetton is still discussed in the Chapter II Painting the picture because it is regarded as one of the breakthrough campaigns that included social advertising as a strategy to sell products. Benetton was one of the first companies to introduce the concept of using taboo topics to raise awareness of social disorder while still promoting fashion.

The social advertisement or community awareness campaigns chosen as case studies were the Montana Meth Project in the US and the Quit Victoria campaign in Australia. Both campaigns were designed to raise awareness of substance

abuse and help people quit drugs and smoking. The context of these advertising campaigns has a different point of view, as they are aimed to talk people out of buying or consuming a product, essentially drugs. The approaches of these campaigns, however, are similar as they use shock, threat appeal or sex tactics to talk the consumer out of the product, just as Diesel does to sell their products. The advertisements are more graphic and confronting, pushing the boundaries of what is ethically acceptable even further.

The two campaigns were chosen for their controversial use of images and text, as well as for being current campaigns, topical during the time the research was conducted. Due to their controversial nature these campaigns had a high media coverage in journals, newspapers and on the web. This offered diverse, current literature and data about these campaigns from a media and consumer point of view. Furthermore the success and reputation of these campaigns opened the door for discussion of themes that related to the research questions and objectives of this research.

#### 4.1.4.2. Visual Analysis

There are many ways to interpret and analyse advertising speech and imagery. For this research the approach of visual analysis was chosen to focus on the overall appearances of the campaigns, the process of designing advertising campaigns from the advertisers' point of view and first impression on the consumer. Visual analysis was used to establish categories and a framework, especially for the case studies. Visual analysis involves looking closely at the visual qualities of the advertisement and considering how the various elements come together to create an effect. The analysis will explain the relationship of several parts to one another. It will then take the previously gathered information in context (Twitchell, 2000; "Visual Analysis,"). The visual analysis will help to further answer some of the research objectives, with the intention of establishing shock advertising features, and describing background information.

For the analysis of the case studies, background information was gathered to create a solid basis for the analysis. For the extended analysis, signs and symbols are essential to tell the entire story of the campaign and reveal the advertisers' tactics. These signs and symbols can be in the form of words and images which make announcements about businesses. The use of symbols and icons by

corporations is a way of establishing corporate identity that is easy for the consumer to remember and recognise. The use of symbols, icons and words help get across the intended message that needs to be conveyed, and helps give the consumer a sense of what the corporation is about (Berger, 2005).

#### 4.1.4.3. Internal and External Validity

For this research, validity is considered an attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings. Researcher bias can affect the internal validity in qualitative research. As the author presents any research finding, the researcher's subjectivity needs to be considered. The samples are both collected and interpreted by the researcher (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2007) and this can affect the opinions collected: as the researcher leads the interviews, they could be led in a direction that was subconsciously intended by the researcher.

The external validity determines to what extent the results can be generalised. Due to the non-random selection and narrowly defined samples, generalisation is limited. However, the aim of this thesis is not to make generalisations, or general rules, but rather to show the relevance of the particular. The open-ended interview questions helped collect statements and achieve differences in opinion.

To enhance validity triangulation was used, which utilises the three instruments: textual analysis, interviews and case studies to collect data. When a conclusion is supported by data collected from a number of instruments, validity is thereby enhanced. Additionally, detailed records have been obtained of the interview procedure by transcribing them. This allows a recall of details from the interviews and correct citation of statements made by the interviewees (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2007). To further minimise validity issues, the research was carried out with consistency in selecting the interviewees. This was achieved through choosing highly respected advertising agencies with a range of successful nationally and internationally known advertising campaigns.

#### 4.1.5. Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of the research conducted. For this research, reliability was enhanced through detailed preparation and the crosschecking of important data gathered from the interviews. Additionally the

use of several methods ensured dependability of the research as well as the consistency in which the research was retrieved.

It is also important that the analysis of the research is reliable. This was achieved by making sure that the statements made by the interviewees were not decontextualised nor abstracted, through the detailed description of the interviews including pauses, silences, raising of voice or other reactions. When it seemed important to follow up questions were raised that summarised parts of the previous answers (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2007).

#### **4.1.6. Justification of Methods**

The importance of using a qualitative approach for this research was clear early in the research process. Qualitative research allows for the interest in the quality of particular relationships, activities or situations; in this case the relationship of shock advertising and the advertiser to each other. It permits testing the literature in comparison to the statements made by the advertising professionals. The known strengths of qualitative research are the creation of definitions in context, assessment of validity through the cross checking of sources or information, the preference for expert informant samples and the preference for narrative summary of the results. Qualitative research further shows major interest in the perspectives of the interviewees in the study, explaining their thought processes. The collected data are detailed and in-depth and capture the interviewee's personal perspectives and experiences. Additionally, the design flexibility that is offered by qualitative research opens possibilities to deepen the understanding of the situation. It avoids getting locked into rigid designs that eliminate responsiveness and can pursue new paths of discovery as they occur (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2008; Silverman, 2008).

These advantages were utilised in this research through the semi-structured interviews, allowing for flexibility, and showing the perspective of the informant and producing a narrative summary of the results. These results are detailed and in-depth, allowing a new insight into the topic of shock advertising and the advertiser. The validity was cross-checked and supported through the use of textual analysis, interviews and the case studies.



#### **4.1.7. Ethics**

The issue of research ethics was carefully considered, especially for the interviews. Ethics clearance was applied for from Curtin University to carry out the research, and received see Appendices. A Participant Information Sheet was compiled, explaining the intent and idea of the research. It was made clear to the interviewee that the process was entirely voluntary.

Additionally, permission was asked to use their names and professional background. Each participant was, however, given the option not to be named. There were no rigid rules in this context, which allowed flexibility to suit all needs. A list of questions was put together, and made available to the interviewees who wanted more detailed information to prepare for the session.

As shock advertising can include very controversial imagery, ranging from highly sexual to very graphic and realistic, a Participant Information Sheet was given to the interviewees who each signed a Consent Form.

#### **4.1.8. Limitations**

The limitations of this research are mostly relevant to time restrictions. Advertising is a fast changing medium with regular new developments. The need for the research collection to end at some stage limits the data. Further limitations lie within the interviews, as it is difficult to anticipate the exact direction these will take. Further it is not possible to inform the respondent about the goal and focus of the research in detail in advance. Follow up questions can emerge from the interviews, due to the international nature of the research it is difficult to have follow-up questions answered. This can possibly lead to unresolved problems, which will be discussed in further detail in later chapters.

## *Chapter IV*

# Case Studies and Interviews

## 5 Samples

The development and background information of the case studies will allow further in-depth insight into shock advertising and the related topics of desensitisation, self-regulation and context of shock advertising. It will also show through the images the significant changes shock advertising has gone through since its first appearances, and possible effects on the consumer. Further selection processes will explain fashion and not-for-profit organisations.

### 5.1 Fashion Advertising

The selection of fashion advertising was based on the observation that shock advertising and fashion advertising seem to go together. Within the lists of most complained about ads, Diesel, Benetton, Sisley, Calvin Klein, Gucci, Dior, and Yves Saint Laurent were most dominantly represented. Looking at the most complained about lists from the ASB, sex and nudity have been attracting a large amount of complaints since 2005 (Figure II-7, pg. 77). The observation is that fashion advertising has a tendency to use sex and nudity to gain large amounts of attention (ASB, 2008c; Broden, 2002).

It is well-documented that the amount of sex in advertising continues to increase even today. When talking about sex in advertising, it is important to move beyond the personal level of interpretation to what sex in advertising actually is. Sexual content can vary in format and meaning. This has been researched by academics since the 1960s. Within this research, sex in advertising refers to the sexual *appeal* represented within the campaign (LaCaze, 2001; Putrevu, 2008; Reichert, 2003; Reichert & Lambiase, 2002).

A poll from 1999 revealed that more than 70% of respondents thought there was too much sexual imagery in advertising and advertising analysis suggest that ads carry more sexual references than ever before. More recently the influences of emotions have been added to the research. Findings from these studies have suggested that the relationship between evaluations and sexual images are complex and depend on variables such as the sex of the respondent, the sex of the model or actor, the level of explicitness and relevance to the brand (Reichert & Lambiase, 2002).

Reichert & Lambiase (2002) describe sex in advertising as “an applied form of persuasion that attempts to inform position, convince, reinforce, differentiate and ultimately sell products and services.” Sex in advertising is a persuasive appeal that contains sexual information within the overall message to further persuade the consumer to buy the product, service or good. According to Reichert ads contain attractive or suggestive words, images and references to create sexual meaning in ads. However the question of relevance is raised. How relevant are sex and fashion to each other?

According to the studies, sex is most effective when there is a relevance to the brand. Don Gregory argues that sex is a powerful weapon, but must be accurately aimed: “It’s all about appropriateness for the brand and the target market. So breasts [in ads] for Ralph magazine – meet the teens inside, awesome! Breasts for Better Homes and Gardens build this rack at home. Not so good” (Casimir, 2010).

However, where is the relevance between fashion brands and sexuality? It is clear that fashion makes a statement of who people are. Fashion, whether sexual or conservative, makes a statement. The fashion industry positions its brands as sexual to suggest that sex-related benefits can occur to the brand purchasers. At first glance nudity and selling the newest jeans does not make sense, but in today’s media environment the company is not just selling jeans or high-end dresses, but a lifestyle of luxury, sexuality. It could even be seen as affection. Reichert’s and Lambiase’s (2002) research shows that there is little doubt that any type of sexual advertising content is here to stay, as it has become commonplace to promote an increasingly wider range of mainstream products, services and goods with sex.

The high amount of sexual content in advertising leads to the refrain of “Sex sells”. Does sex really sell? Studies show that sexual appeals increase attention and make a message stand out. It generates higher recall, better recognition and more positive association. This does not eliminate the consideration that it can be somewhat unethical and offensive (Putrevu, 2008).

Todd Sampson from Leo Burnett Sydney says “Sex sells. Not for everything, but it definitely sells. Sex is the second-strongest psychological appeal behind self-preservation. It’s one of the basic human emotions and will remain in advertising as long as advertising exists, because we are in the business of using human emotions to help sell products” (cited in Casimir, 2010). Casimir (2010) further goes on to say that it is not so important whether sex sells, but to whom it sells and in what circumstances.

Sex is not the only topic in fashion advertising that has been highly discussed. The fashion label Benetton was at the frontier, opening doors for advertising that was on the edge of shock and social awareness to sell clothing. One cannot ignore the impact Benetton had on controversial topics in advertising. Consumers questioned Benetton as to its relevance between brand advertising and the product being sold. However, once reading through the interviews of Toscani, it is possible to think that he was motivated not so much by the profits Benetton would make, but the social statement he could make with these advertisements. The brand wanted to gain attention through ethical values and involvement in social and cultural initiatives. Even though Benetton gained controversial publicity, they nonetheless had sales success with their campaigns. Benetton has remained a successful fashion brand, even without their controversial advertising campaigns by Toscani. In 2011 the company was represented in 120 countries with a network of 6000 stores around the world, producing 150 million garments every year and generating a total turnover of more than 2 billion Euros (Benetton; Benetton).

Diesel was one of the companies that followed in the footsteps of Benetton and socially controversial advertising. However, while Diesel is also known for their use of sexuality in advertising, Calvin Klein is even more so, according to an article in Adweek (Inc., 2003). Calvin Klein topped the list of the lowest moments in advertising “with a notorious 1995 campaign that showed prepubescent teens in their underwear”. According to Adweek (Inc., 2003), fashion companies tend

to aim at cutting-edge advertising "...that's packaged with thinly veiled attempts at social consciousness, as seen in ads from Benetton and Kenneth Cole ...". Adweek makes the additional statement that everyone loses in these cases.

The following Calvin Klein and Diesel were chosen as case studies due to their controversial reputation within the media and their high popularity. These brands have polarised consumers for or against them through cutting-edge advertising. These companies have been operating for over 40 years. This makes it possible to show changes within the advertising industry, and consumers, with respect to what is acceptable advertising and what is not. The development of advertising by these companies will illustrate how shock advertising has become more shocking over time, and the diversity of what can be called shock advertising.

#### **5.1.1. Who or what is Calvin Klein?**

Calvin Klein was born to Jewish Hungarian immigrants in November 1942 in the Bronx of New York. His love for fashion and sewing came from his grandmother, who was a seamstress. He started his label, Calvin Klein (CK) in 1968 and sold it in 2003 for \$US739 million. Calvin Klein has become a famous brand, particularly known for its controversial advertising. It has pushed the boundaries of what is socially acceptable since the 1980s when 15-year-old Brooke Shields (see Image IV-1) announced that nothing came between her and her Calvin Klein jeans (2010).



**Image IV-1: Calvin Klein Advertising Campaign featuring Brooke Shields (Wenzel & Lippert, 2008)**

This advertisement campaign caused a lot of controversy in the US and is still well known nearly thirty years later. In 1995 CK pushed the boundaries of acceptability too far, with an advertisement that was reportedly inspired by an editorial spread in Italian Vogue that was an homage to 1960s porn. Steven Meisel was hired to shoot a similar ad for CK Jeans, featuring models that were only 15 years of age. The campaign showed teenage boy and nubile girl models, lying with their denim skirts hiked up revealing their white panties. Adweek described the advertising with a porn-set- style with bad lighting, dirty purple carpet and rec-room panelling. That advertisement stretched the envelope of acceptability. The US Justice Department launched an investigation into whether child pornography laws had been breached. CK had to withdraw their advertisements (Boone; "Calvin Klein Advertising," 2011; 2010; Shaw, 2010; Zimmermann, 2010).

In 1999 CK again was criticised for a controversial children's underwear advertising campaign. The photography for the campaign was interpreted as child pornography and within 24 hours from publishing, the media withdrew the adverts from billboards as the public outcry was too strong. The fashion photographer Mario Testino said that the ad was "intended to show children smiling, laughing and just being themselves. We wanted to capture the same warmth and spontaneity that you find in a family snapshot. "However, this was

not effectively communicated to its critics, leaving them unimpressed ("Calvin Klein Jeans Ads 1990," ; Karyn, 2010; 2010).



**Image IV-2: Calvin Klein Jeans Advertising Campaign 2010 ("Lara Stone's Banned Calvin Klein Billboard Ad – PHOTO," 2010)**

CK has continued to push the boundaries in various advertising campaigns and most likely always will, as this defines the brand and their target audience (Image IV-2).

### **5.1.2. What is Diesel?**

Renzo Rosso founded the company Diesel in 1978. In Rosso's early years he started sewing on his mother's sewing machine. When he sewed his first pair of jeans, he thought they were too clean and stiff. As a result he rubbed these on concrete to make the jeans softer, creating the *Used Look*. The mission of Diesel was to create "an apparel line perfect for independent people who follow their own unique path in life and for those style-makers who express their individuality by the way they dress" (Kultur, 2008). Currently Diesel has over 1200 employees with 200 stores worldwide.

Diesel's design team, headed by Creative Director Wilbert Das "turned their backs on the style-dictators and consumer forecasters of the fashion establishment" and let their own personal tastes lead them. The company views the world as a single, borderless macro-culture. The Diesel staff reflects this by

being a cosmopolitan team that creates an unpredictable, dynamic vitality and energy within the company. Diesel and their working methods are claimed to be unconventional (Image IV-3), albeit productive, and are profiled in countless media (Diesel, 2012).



**Image IV-3: Diesel Advertising Campaign from early 1990s (Wenzel & Lippert, 2008)**

The company works globally with the most creative agencies through which they have created their own advertising style. This style continuously changes, but has always stayed within the Diesel philosophy, maintaining its international recognition. Sex, intelligence, humour, heart, provocation and product messaging dominate the advertising of Diesel (Diesel, 2012).

Diesel was the first company in the 1990s to use this type of advertising messaging, rejecting marketing and market research.





**Image IV-4: Diesel Advertising Campaign “Footwear A Boots” from 2006 (Wenzel & Lippert, 2008)**

In 2006 Diesel had to recall the campaign *Footwear A Boots* (Image IV-4) designed by ER 27 Advertising Agency, as it was considered to have taken the imagery too far from what was morally acceptable in the US. The sexual references within the campaign were too strong according to its critics.

## 5.2 Not-for-profit organisations

Not-for-profit organisations, social advertising and ethical advertising all have a common goal: to design advertising that will change bad or dangerous habits of the individual and community.

Social marketing campaigns often use emotional appeals in an attempt to encourage compliant behaviour from the public. It is often used by not-for profit and government organisations to also educate the consumer about the consequences of their behaviour, to ensure not only the wellbeing of the individual but the wellbeing of the community. The need to encourage the public to voluntarily comply with requirements, such as drunk driving, is an important component of public safety development (Brennan & Binney, 2009).

Mostly these types of campaigns are health campaigns, which are often government funded. Health campaigns represent an outcome of the social process in which dissimilar values and disproportionate power compete for the attention and action of policy makers and the public according to Gutmann 1997 and Salmon 1989 (cited in Brennan & Binney, 2009). They are designed to influence a large number of individuals' beliefs, attitudes and behaviours (Roger and Storey 1987, cited in Cho & Salmon, 2007). The outcome of these kinds of messages refers to the degree of loss, gain, threat or benefit in, for example, a health communication message (Leshner & Cheng, 2009).

The campaigns need to be designed by advertising agencies. Often, as these are government funded or for not-for-profit organisations and do not generate a lot of income, the advertising agencies need an incentive to design these campaigns. Designing social advertising is not only good for the brand and image of an agency, but the incentive given to them is more creative freedom (Clarke, 2010; Grace, 2010). As Grace (2010) described, the agencies charge less for government funded health or safety campaigns or not-for-profit organisations, with the incentive of being more creative. In this case one could say that it this allows agencies to further push the boundaries of what is acceptable. This statement supports the observation that social advertising has more liberty in pushing the boundaries of what is socially acceptable advertising. The positive effects of social advertising for a brand of any kind create the opportunity for "using ideologies of social awareness to give [the] suggestion of progressiveness and cultural sophistication".

Anti-smoking and anti-drug campaigns are the most frequently addressed prevention programs in public health campaigns. Their effectiveness, however, is debated. The US Government has conducted an anti-drug advertising campaign, spending \$1.4 billion since 1998. Nevertheless, according to the Government Accountability office (cited in Leinwand, 2006), it does not appear to have helped reduce drug use, and instead might have convinced some youths that taking illegal drugs is normal. Youth seem sceptical of these campaigns and their messages, as they talk down to them and not with them (Teinowitz, 2005). They are not able to connect with the message. Further they seem ineffective due to the repetition of anti-drug messages aimed at youth through schools and other mass media. This reflects the idea of desensitisation, not only of imagery within advertising but the messages and constant confrontation.

Nonetheless health campaigns have become a dominant part of the advertising industry. Reviews of the effects of anti-smoking advertising show that the effectiveness of such messages depends on the type of appeals used in anti-smoking messages (Leshner & Cheng, 2009). Road safety campaigns are most likely to be fear-based appeals. Fear is the most frequently used tactic in health campaigns advocating behaviour change (Cho & Salmon, 2007; Lewis, Watson, & White, 2008). Prendegast et.al. (2008) recommend that agencies and their clients need to focus on the offensiveness of the execution of an advertisement and the associated creative tactics. While marketers need to be careful when dealing with risky advertising matter, in social advertising this risky messaging seems to have more of an impact, especially when relying on realistic scenes (Sibley & Harré, 2009). With high or medium levels of fear appeals it is more likely to change undesirable behaviour according to Terblanche-Smith & Terblanche (2009). Humorous appeals including positive emotions are less likely to be recalled and less effective over longer periods (Lewis, Watson, White et al. 2007 cited in Lewis et al., 2008).

Earlier literature on the effectiveness of message framing led researchers to the conclusion that negative, loss and “fear framed” messages were more effective than positive, “gain framed” messages (Leshner & Cheng, 2009). Showing the consumer the negative consequences of their actions seems to touch the consumer on a more emotional and personal level, which convinces them to change habits. Further literature suggests that this is not as effective with younger audiences, as they do not feel vulnerable to the health risks caused by smoking (Chang, 2009; Leshner & Cheng, 2009).



**Image IV-5 Anti-Smoking Campaign Brazil ("Brazilian Health Department scariest anti-smoking campaign," 2008)**

It is not only the countries already mentioned that are designing controversial advertisements to gain attention to unhealthy behaviour. In 2010 the Ministry of Health in Brazil (see Image IV-5) presented new warning advertising images to be printed on cigarette packaging. The new illustrations are among those to be accompanied with a message about the damage to the health of smokers and children from tobacco. The objective of the measure is to reduce tobacco consumption, which is responsible for 200,000 deaths a year in Brazil (2010).

Among the new illustrations, the packaging will show a mouth and a lung affected by cancer; an aborted foetus; a mouse and cockroaches killed by arsenic and naphthalene, which are substances present in cigarettes.

Besides the illustrations, the packaging will have the following alert: "This product contains more than 4,700 poisonous substances; nicotine causes physical and psychological dependence. Safe levels do not exist for consumption of these substances" (2010).



**Image IV-6 Anti-Smoking Campaign Spain (2009)**

A further example is the Spanish advertising campaign (Image IV-6) against smoking. This campaign shows a smoker trapped within a cigarette trying to escape. It plays on the fears and desires of the smoker and their struggles to change their habits.

The following two case studies are very different in their approach. Montana Meth is aimed at teens and young drug addicts, using fear appeal and realistic imagery to change their habits. Even though there is little research done on the effectiveness of this tactic, the studies suggest that it is the most effective.

Quit Victoria is aimed at smokers of all ages, but predominantly at adult smokers. This campaign shocks people not with imagery to quit smoking, but through the appeals of other smokers. The approach each campaign takes is very different and shows the variety of shock advertising and how it can be applied.

### **5.2.1. Montana Meth Project**

Businessman Thomas M. Siebel established the Montana Meth Project in 2005. It was a response to the growing methamphetamine problems in the US. The Montana Meth Project is a large-scale prevention program aimed at reducing methamphetamine use through “public service messaging”. The campaign is trying to discourage the consumption of the drug by its primary audience, young people in the US (“About Us,”). According to the US Department of Justice,

methamphetamine use is one of the greatest drug threats within the US. Due to high levels of small domestic production and increased supply from Mexico, methamphetamine reached its highest levels of availability, purity and lowest cost since 2005 in 2011. As methamphetamine is one of the most addictive substances known, it poses a great threat not only to the individual but also to society. This can be seen within treatment, health care and foster services, as well as in costs of crime and lost productivity ("About Us,").



**Image IV-7: Montana Meth Advertising Campaign, Leaving a friend for dead isn't normal ("Montana Meth Project About Us," 2009)**

The advertising campaigns (Image IV-7) used by the Montana Meth Project are highly graphic and shocking, however the advertisements claim to be real depictions of what actually happens to people with a methamphetamine addiction. Common elements of the campaigns are the deterioration of each teenager's health and living conditions, amphetamine psychosis, moral compromise and regret. The Meth Project is funded by a grant from the Thomas and Stacey Siebel Foundation. Due to its success and the falling numbers of addiction, the campaign was also launched in Arizona, Idaho and five other States ("About Us,").

The central program is a research-based marketing campaign and community action program designed to communicate the risks of methamphetamine use. Periodic research is conducted nationally and state wide to understand the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour towards methamphetamine. Research already conducted includes a survey of 50,000 teens, 112 focus groups and experts. This allowed the design of a program to prevent methamphetamine use through

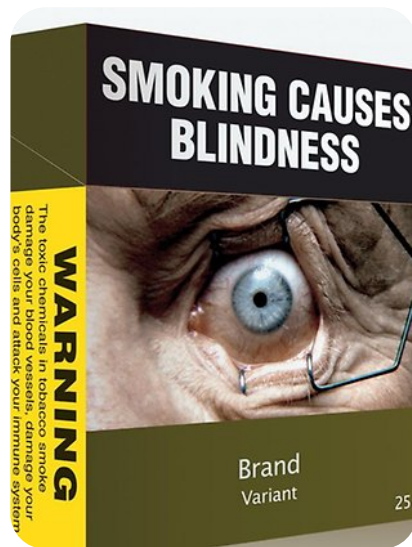
advertising campaigns and digital media, to educate, inform and graphically communicate the risks. The program has not only worked, reflected by research that shows that methamphetamine use has been dropping, but has won 50 awards for their campaigns. This includes awards from Cannes Lions Festival, Gold Effie Awards and Cannes International Advertising Festival ("About Us,").

### **5.2.2. Quit Victoria**

Quit Victoria is another not-for-profit advertising campaign using shock advertising to grab the attention of its target audience. The campaign is considered as a new approach which has never been seen before in Australia. It was started in 1985 and has led the battle against smoking in Australia. The campaign aims to communicate confidence to addicted consumers about their ability to quit for good, rather than focusing on the negative effects of smoking. Victorian Health works to promote better health and prevent the harmful effects of smoking by contributing to the funding of the Quit campaign and additionally supporting legislative policy change and reducing the numbers of places where people are exposed to smoking (QuitVictoria).

Social costs from smoking include costs to government, business, smokers and their families. In the financial year 2004/05, the total social costs of tobacco use in Australia were \$31.5 billion. This accounted for 56.2% of the total social costs of all drugs, including alcohol and illicit drugs. This shows the prevalence of smoking, and the necessity to take action against it.





**Image IV-8: Quit Victoria, 2012 advertising campaign ("Road Safety Campaign by DDB Sydney," 2008)**

Quit Victoria is a joint initiative of the Cancer Council Victoria, Department of Health, National Heart Foundation and VicHealth. In 1989 the Cancer Council achieved a great breakthrough in the battle against smoking, by implementing a ban on print advertising of tobacco and tobacco products. This meant no more cigarette advertisements in newspapers and magazines (Council).

The campaign has made considerable progress in reducing the usage of tobacco and its related problems since its establishment (Image IV-8). This was achieved through the implementation of a strategic plan by Quit Victoria to dedicate themselves to eliminate the pain, illness and suffering caused by tobacco (QuitVictoria).

Quit Victoria has recently joined a partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Tobacco Control Project. Under this partnership the Victorian Government is committed to reducing the prevalence of smoking among Aboriginal people from 32.8% to 26% by 2013, the burden of tobacco related chronic diseases within the Aboriginal community and the number of Aboriginal women smoking during pregnancy. Quit Victoria has employed Aboriginal Quitline Officers to provide essential support. Further it is supporting football and netball clubs with a significant number of Aboriginal players and links with local communities to go smoke-free (QuitVictoria).



### 5.3 Selection of Advertising Representatives

Advertising agencies play a key but invisible role in the advertising process by translating the advertisers goals into creative messages that are placed within the media to the target audience. They exist for the purpose of interpreting information about the goods and services being marketed to the target audience. With the necessary background information the agencies create and produce the advertisements, buying media space and time. As previously described, advertising operates in a larger marketing context. The advertising plan is developed in cooperation with the objectives and strategy established in the clients' marketing mix (Bovée et al., 1995; Schultz, Martin, & Brown, 1984). This includes the use of consistent branding, how the clients want to be represented or perceived by the audience, and how the consumer should be approached. These are only some points that are established. Most importantly the way the measurement of success will be identified. When can the advert be called successful?

To provide "international reach" a number of companies have created agency networks. These are collection of agencies connected through ownership or agreements to help each other implement multi-country campaigns (Bovée et al., 1995).

Todd Sampson (cited in Casimir, 2010) "What ad agencies do best is create a product, make it desirable and then incentivise through reward."

A brief overview is given in this section of the different companies that were selected as typical and "snowball" samples, according to their experiences, current campaigns and position within this industry. These are directly linked to the interviews, these companies being where the interviewees work.

All of these businesses are examples of nationally and internationally known advertising agencies. They have established themselves not only in their home country but internationally, and have won awards locally and internationally. Some of these companies established themselves as important agencies in the earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century and have had an impact on the development of advertising. Rather than ranking the agencies to establish their importance and place within

the advertising industry we will instead establish the companies' importance by describing their high profile clients, awards and media attention.

### **5.3.1. The Agency Team**

The Agency Team – Multi Channel Communication was founded in 1996 as Energy Werbung GmbH, located in Stuttgart, Germany. The partners are Frank Welyel, Michael Horlacher, Ralf Welyel and OgilvyOne Germany. The company covers all media and provides a full service package in consumer and business-to-business advertising. Clients include Die Bahn, DHL, IBM Lenovo (as this is a worldwide client of OgilvyOne, run by the Agency Team), Avira and several more. The Agency Team has also received several awards including the Cannes Direct Lions in 2008. Ogilvy, their international partner, has 140 offices in 40 countries ("The Agency Team," 2010; Ogilvy, 2007).

### **5.3.2. Biedermann & Brandstift**

Biedermann & Brandstift is an advertising agency specializing in fashion and lifestyle. The company was founded in 2001 with 20 employees, located in Frankfurt, Germany. Biedermann and Brandstift is not a large multinational network agency. Their mission is to "get the best results and get it without the fuss". Clients of Biedermann and Brandstift include Timberland, Tommy Hilfiger Germany and USA, Hugo Boss, George Gina and Lucy, Höchst and several other brands. The company successfully designs for all media outlets, winning the Grand award and the Gold World Medal at the New York Festival. Additionally, the company came sixth in the new media creative ranking of Horizont (a German advertising, marketing and media magazine) at the New York Festival ("Biedermann und Brandstift," 2010).

### **5.3.3. The Brand Agency**

The Brand Agency is one of Australia's leading creative agencies, delivering creative solutions across all platforms. The company was established in 1991 with offices in Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and Auckland. Clients include Alinta, Bunnings Warehouse, Channel Nine, City Farmers, RAC, and Perth Zoo. The agency has won the 2011 Sirens Award in three categories for their Perth Zoo advertising campaign. Creative Director Craig Buchanan additionally has

previous experiences with Health campaigns, for example the Simone Campaign – Ice from 2007 ("Brand Agency," 2010).

#### 5.3.4. The Campaign Palace

The Campaign Palace was established over 35 years ago with the idea to transform its clients through marketing. The Campaign Palace has been able to change behaviour by understanding behaviour at an analytical level through strategy development, and at an inspirational level through creative execution. Clients include Bonds, Target, Panasonic, RSPCA (Image IV-9) and the Cancer Institute.



Image IV-9: RSPCA: Woman by Campaign Palace Sydney ("RSPCA," 2010)

The Agency has won several awards including one gold and four other Effies in 2010 ("The Campaign Palace," 2010).

#### 5.3.5. Leo Burnett

Leo Burnett first opened its doors in 1935 in Chicago. Since that time the company has grown into an international advertising agency. They distinguish themselves through the use of quantitative research, experience and context planning techniques to communicate lasting messages. According to the company "a brand with one true purpose can be a true agent of change and transform the way people think, feel or act" (Harker & Wiggs, 2000).



**Image IV-10: Marlboro Man by Leo Burnett 1954**

One of their most successful campaigns was probably the Marlboro Man (Image IV-10) in 1954. At the time Marlboro had the smallest market share in the category of cigarettes. By introducing Marlboro Country, Marlboro became a leading brand, placing Leo Burnett in the forefront of worldwide agencies ("Leo Burnett," 1993).

Some of Leo Burnett's clients include Visa, Samsung, McDonalds, Fiat, GM, and Nintendo. With their advertising campaigns they have won a variety of awards such as the prestigious Cannes Lion, Eurobest and Adfest. Leo Burnett has 96 agencies in 84 countries (Harker & Wiggs, 2000).

#### 5.3.5.1. Switzerland

Spillmann/Felsner/Leo Burnett in Zurich opened in July 2002 and in 2011 employed 65 people. This advertising agency is an official international partner of Leo Burnett. Their motivation is to design exceptional advertising for their clients and to have fun doing it. Clients of Spillmann/Felsner/Leo Burnett include companies such as Volvo, Suisse Tourism, Fleurop, Bio Suisse and Tages Anzeiger Zürich ("Spillmann/Felser/ Leo Burnett," 2010).

#### 5.3.5.2. Sydney

Leo Burnett Sydney was crowned Cannes Media Agency of the year at the Cannes Lions International Advertising Festival in 2010 (Campaign Brief, 2010b).

They were ranked number one in the Asia Pacific region. For the first time the Cannes Lions Report identified individual creative success, with Kieran Antill of Leo Burnett Sydney coming in first place as the most awarded Art Director (Campaign Brief, 2010a; Campaign Brief, 2010b).

#### **5.3.6. M&C Saatchi**

In 1995 the brothers Maurice and Charles Saatchi left Saatchi and Saatchi to start a new agency with some close colleagues, founding M&C Saatchi. The agency went international from day one, with offices in five countries and two global clients, British Airways and Qantas. Since then M&C Saatchi has grown to become an advertising agency with the world's largest independent network, and youngest worldwide network, with 25 offices in 18 countries, employing 1000 people. They have built their network by starting up agencies rather than acquiring them, with the core principle of "brutal simplicity". M&C Saatchi cover all advertising disciplines from marketing, branding, public relations to social marketing. Some well-known clients include Yves Rocher, ANZ, Qantas, Porsche, Coca Cola, Sara Lee and Hyundai ("M&C Saatchi," 2010) .

#### **5.3.7. McCann**

Alfred Erickson, an advertising manager at Cutcheos' Department Store started his own advertising agency in Manhattan in 1902, called McCann. With its mission to transform brands and business, McCann has grown to become one of the world's largest marketing communications companies, opening offices all over the world. Clients of McCann include American Airlines, Bacardi, Cathay Pacific, General Motors, Lufthansa, Microsoft, Siemens and Tiffany ("McCann Worldgroup," 2009).

#### **5.3.8. Saatchi & Saatchi**

The Campaign Brief, Australasia's most influential creative advertising trade magazine, has named Saatchi & Saatchi the Australian Advertising Agency of the Decade. Saatchi & Saatchi was founded in 1970 and established an agency in Sydney over ten years ago, as a specialised branding and design arm of Saatchi & Saatchi. They were an early British network builder with 134 offices in 84 countries, employing over 7000 people. It is the number one agency network for

global and regional new business “wins”. Saatchi & Saatchi Sydney have won several awards, most recently winning the Clio Award 2011 Gold for Pedestrian Council of Australia ‘The Smith Family’, which also won gold at the Cannes International Advertising Festival. Clients of Saatchi & Saatchi include international companies, such as Sony Ericsson, Visa Europe, Novartis, Foxtel, Deutsche Telecom, T-Mobile and Emirate Airlines (Bovée et al., 1995; "Saatchi & Saatchi," 2010; "Saatchi & Saatchi Advertising Agency Sydney," 2010; "Saatchi & Saatchi Australia," 2009; "Saatchi Design," 2010).

#### **5.3.9. Scholz and Friends**

Scholz and Friends Advertising Agency has a network throughout Europe, including four cities in Germany. They cover all disciplines from public relations, event management, promotion, advertising and marketing. For over ten years Scholz and Friends have been considered one of the most creative agencies in Germany and, according to the Gunn Report (an annual publication detailing most the successful print and television advertising campaigns) internationally since 1999. Clients include Nato, German Soccer League, Baliso, Masterfoods, TUI Cruises, Deutsche Bank and Vodafone. The agency has also won several awards nationally and internationally such as the Cannes Lions. Scholz and Friends work with Lowe Worldwide. They represent Scholz and Friends in all international markets where they are not yet represented. This allows Scholz and Friends to offer their services in 180 countries ("Scholz & Friends," 2010).

## 6 Implementation

This section will explain how the analysis was implemented and the framework of categories established. Background information on the interviewees will be given to highlight their professional knowledge and add to the understanding of the research process conducted and its validity.

### 6.1 Visual Analysis of Case Studies

The visual analysis will be established in a framework including categories that utilise a basic understanding of semiotics. This analysis is of direct relevance to the research and adds to the understanding of what can be seen and interpreted from the advertising campaigns. Furthermore the analysis displays the concept of the advertiser and the aspects that need to be considered during the design process in advertising.

The intention is to keep the analysis close to the thought process of the advertiser. The following categories have been established and supported through the interviews conducted, with the advertisers themselves raising the categories in the logical order that advertising agencies are most likely to consider them.

A semiotic approach will be applied to the analysis of the advertising campaigns. Semiotics is the field of research that studies signs as an essential part of cultural life and communication ("France - Design around the world,").

"Semiotics has been defined as 'the science of the life of signs in society' ...In its terms everything in a culture can be seen as a form of communication, organised in ways akin to verbal language, to be understood in terms of a common set of fundamental rules or principles" (Hodge & Kress, 1991).

In comparison to Saussure, who originally developed semiology - the analysis of language - Hodge and Kress take semiotics further to understand communication within media. Roland Barthes' approach to semiotics, which sees signs as a wider

system of social myths, enables the analysis of ideology in media combined with social implications. Barthes allows the semiotic analysis through the combination of text and imagery. For this reason, Barthes' approach was selected to interpret the advertising campaigns, as advertising is full of signs and symbols that carry meaning to help communicate advertising effectively and quickly to the consumer (Berger, 2005; Harvey & Evans, 2001; "Norway- Design around the world," ; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008). Barthes' approach to semiotics has been adjusted to serve the purpose of visual semiotic analysis (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008). For this purpose it has been amended to combine it with an advertiser's approach.

The semiotic analysis will provide a set of guidelines to depict and understand the various meanings conveyed within each image. Words and signs do not mean much on their own, as Saussure established; however, they gain their meaning in combination with other words, signs or symbols (Berger, 2005; O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008). The analysis will further the understanding of the relationship of text and image to societal meanings. Semiotic analysis is always dependent on the cultural knowledge of the consumer, which relates directly to the placing of advertisements.

Continuing with the use of triangulation and mixed methods to show different angles of advertising, the visual analysis includes Barthes' semiotic approach to the analysis of advertising signs and the basic structure an advertising agency uses to design advertising campaigns. This includes the consideration of the target market, demographics and the context of a campaign such as the location of where it will appear. This will allow in-depth understanding of the selected case study campaigns.

By combining these methods, the following structure was designed as the framework for the visual analysis:

**a. Intended goal of advertising campaign**

This is the message communicated by the advertiser, their intention of what the consumer should take away from the advertising campaign.

**b. Where was the advertisement published**

Who viewed the advertisement, where was the advertisement published and who was the intended audience; who was the readership if it was



published in a magazine? Who else will see this advertisement due to the media coverage used? This will be directly linked to the discrepancy of who the advertisement was targeted at, and who complained about the advertisements.

**c. Sociological phenomena**

The sociological phenomena not only include the demographics of the intended target audience but also the demographics of the people in the advertisements.

**d. Socioeconomic classes**

This will give an overview of the social status of the intended target audience, their lifestyle, education and occupation.

**e. Overall design of advertisements**

The overall design of an advertising campaign sets the mood and aesthetic appeal not only about the campaign itself but also the representation of the company. This includes the typography, colour usage and aesthetics.

**f. Signs**

The semiotic analysis within this section will be based on several components within the advertising campaign. It includes:

*Sign* (these are part of the denotative and connotative meaning), communicates the meaning by standing in for or representing a thing or idea. This can also include a logo. The sign will gain its meaning, as Saussure described, through the combination of other signs and visual aids.

*Denotative meaning* refers to the most obvious meaning a sign communicates; this can also be the descriptive level.

*Connotative meaning* refers to the emotions and values that a sign gives the reader and the feeling that is being conveyed.

*Anchorage* in advertising campaigns mainly describes text to articulate the preferred meaning of a label or images. This will limit multiple possible meanings.

*Implied narrative* is the story the picture tells, which can include implied story before and directly after the image (Berger, 2005; O'Shaugnessy &

Stadler, 2008). The implied narrative can also be a combination of the previous aspects, bringing each together to tell the implied story.

Through the consideration of these aspects it is possible to decode the advertisements meaning and it is possible to show how meaning constructed.

The visual analysis will be conducted for advertising campaigns rather than just single advertisements. The campaigns will highlight the consistency of design and show the reinforcement of communicating the messages.

This visual analysis is necessary to understand the images surrounding people, to know what is being observed in the public domain. The analysis additionally is important to understand the issues regarding shock advertising and why questions need to be asked. It will form the foundation of the discussion and help in understand the relationship between the creation of advertising campaigns, perception, self-regulation and what shock advertising really is.

## 6.2 Literature Analysis

The literature analysis established a framework for the research, by setting a basic structure for the interview questions and the topics that needed to be discussed, based on the ideas of textual analysis. The three main categories that were established form the foundation for the interview questions. This additionally sets up the research discussion, as comparisons can be made between the textual analysis and the interviews.

At first three topics of research were developed, which became the main topics of the interviews.

### **a. Self-regulation**

The literature review has shown gaps and discrepancies regarding the efficiency of self-regulation within Australia, as well as the questioning of the power of the system of self-regulation. The discrepancies raise questions that need to be asked within the interview, to gain a perspective from the professionals. Self-regulation is an important part of the research as the lack of effectiveness might also allow shock advertising in public spaces. How do advertisers deal with self-regulation within their

countries? How effective is self-regulation in their opinion, and can changes be made that would improve the effectiveness, such as more government involvement? Do more advertisements need to be changed by the advertisers to make them socially acceptable? Should this be done by the self-regulatory body or remain with the advertiser?

In most developed countries the system of self-regulation is a voluntary process. It can be seen just as guidelines provided to the advertisers, but self-regulation does not have the power to ban advertisements, just to suggest it. Does this mean that the system of self-regulation is a toothless tiger?

#### **b. Perception of profit versus not-for-profit advertising**

The literature has provided a definition of shock advertising, what it means and how it can be displayed. However, during the course of the research the question of what is included within shock advertising has emerged, and the concept of different goal orientated advertising. Does shock advertising need to be categorised within the advertising process into profit and not-for-profit, or social advertising?

When reviewing the statistics of most complained about advertisements (see Chapter II Painting the picture) it is noteworthy that there is very little social or not-for-profit advertising within those lists, even though they use shock, fear or sex appeal to push the boundaries of what is acceptable. Is there a higher acceptance of social advertising that pushes the ethical and social boundaries in comparison to profit-oriented advertising using the same strategies?

#### **c. Desensitisation**

It is apparent that it has become harder and harder to communicate advertising messages effectively to the target audience in such a saturated advertising and media environment. Researchers are certain that the oversaturation of advertising has had some effect on the consumer. This must have a dramatic effect on the advertisers' strategy to target their audience, resulting in more controversial advertising to clearly differentiate from other advertisements and gain attention. Is shock advertising a necessity for advertisers as a strategy to gain consumers' attention?

After conducting three interviews, several other categories appeared that needed to be included within the framework of textual analysis. These categories were mentioned by each advertising professional, suggesting they were important to investigate in the following interviews. They subsequently became topics that changed the importance of self-regulation of shock advertising. Due to the interview structure it was possible to adjust the questions and explore these topics in further depth. The framework had to be adjusted as well as the literature research. The shift within the topics revealed the gap between theory and reality even further.

The following topics were identified and expanded upon:

**d. Context of advertising**

The placement of advertising has developed to become a major issue in the evaluation of shock advertising. The placement describes the location where the advertisement is placed, whether it is in Sydney or a small suburb. Not only does the setting change but also the consumer and their demographics, which changes the acceptance of advertising. The issue of placement tied in with the idea of higher acceptance for shock advertising in social advertising campaigns: benefiting the consumers versus profit-orientated campaigns that support retail. The context of this acceptance allows a new positive view on shock advertising, showing the different sides it can take: social conscious and consumer benefit, or money making.

Exploring the context of shock advertising in more detail with regard to intent and placement directly questioned not only the definition of shock advertising, but raised the question of whether it exists at all.

**e. Definition and placement of shock advertising**

The definition of shock advertising as a term began to be discussed by the interviewees, who had several different definitions or expressions to define shock advertising. Audiences viewing shock advertising judge it within their cultural context, which is in part dependent on the advertisement's location.

The advertising industry professionals expressed varied opinions during the interviews on how to view shock advertising, whether as a strategy or just an appeal. Comparing the definition developed in the literature

showed a difference to what the advertising industry describes as shock advertising. Does this definition depend on its context? How can it be defined within a business advertising perspective and where is it to be placed as a strategy within the advertising industry?

## 6.3 Interviews

In this section the background about the interviewees will be given, establishing their credibility and expertise within advertising, describing their past and current experiences within the industry, working with a number of different clients and in different sectors. These are all advertising professionals with extensive experience within advertising.

This research assumes that the interviewee's philosophy is in alignment with their company's philosophy, due to the fact that the interviewee is a representative of the company and needs to align their ideas when representing the agency with their mission and goals. Further it is expected that the individual works for a company not only for the reason of earning money, but with personal interest and passion for the topic.

The interviewees represent a cross section found within an advertising agency ranging from co-founders, Senior Vice President, Directors of Strategic Planning, and Creative Director, to photographers and copywriters.

The list of interviewees is in alphabetical order. The data was compiled in 2010.

### 6.3.1. Amy Messinger

Amy Messinger is the Senior Vice President and Director of Strategic Planning at McCann Ericson in Los Angeles, USA. She has been working in the advertising industry for 15 years specialising in brand architecture, brand positioning recommendations, creative briefs and consumer insight thought-pieces. Her main role in the advertising campaigns is Strategic Planning.

### **6.3.2. Christian Fischer**

Christian Fischer is the Manager and Creative Director of Biedermann & Brandstift in Frankfurt, Germany. He has been working in the advertising industry for approximately 10 years including campaigns for Tommy Hilfiger and Timberland. As the Creative Director he is involved in all campaigns for the company.

### **6.3.3. David G. Mallen**

David Mallen is the Associate Director at the National Advertising Division (NAD) for Legal Affairs, which is part of the Council of Better Business. He joined the NAD in March 1999. His role is to review national advertising campaigns, analyse claim-substantiated issues and resolve disputes between advertisers, consumers and/or competitors. Before working for NAD, Mallen practiced law at Kensington & Ressler L.L.C in New York City, where he concentrated on product liability defence, business counselling and commercial litigation. He is an experienced trial lawyer with a background in biological science. David Mallen has published a number of articles including, Baby Steps at NAD: The Advertising of Infant Formula, Consumer Protection Update, American Bar Association, Volume 11 No. 2 (2003) and Advertising Review 2000: The NARB Roundup, Advertising Compliance Service, Vol. XXI, Nos. 9, 10 (2001).

### **6.3.4. David O'Loughlin**

David O'Loughlin has been the Head of Strategy at Saatchi & Saatchi in Sydney since 2009. He began his career in the early 1990s with Young & Rubicam Adelaide before moving to London to work with Banks Hoggins O'Shea FCB. After a number of years there, he moved to North America to head up Strategic Planning for Dentsu Canada before moving to the United States as a partner at Ogilvy & Mather Chicago. Upon returning to Australia, he joined Whybin/TBWA Melbourne before moving to Sydney to become the National Planning Director. There he played an integral role in shaping the success of their Australian business, forming strong client relationships and becoming one of the network's most respected planning directors.

### **6.3.5. Steve Anastasiadis**

Steve Anastasiadis is the Executive Director at Saatchi & Saatchi Sydney. He has been with Saatchi & Saatchi for the past 19 years. His main field of work is in marketing and advertising. He started working in Sydney for the company; however, he has also worked in Europe and the Middle East, in Dubai, for three years. Steve has also done regional work in Asia. Working in different countries for Saatchi & Saatchi has given him a different perspective into the Saatchi & Saatchi company's operations.

### **6.3.6. Florian Schwalme**

Florian Schwalme has worked as a copywriter at Scholz and Friends in Berlin, Germany since 2004. He has been working on campaigns for foreign aid organisations such as "Menschen für Menschen" ("people for people"), helping in Ethiopia, or other campaigns involving environmental protection for German organisations.

### **6.3.7. Henning Mayer**

Henning Mayer works as a copywriter and strategist for the Agency Team (Ogilvy) in Stuttgart, Germany. His main task is to use words and ideas to promote a business, product, service, person or idea to persuade the consumer. He works within a team including art directors, graphic designers and others. Henning Mayer has been working in the industry since 1999.

### **6.3.8. Patric Shaw**

Patric Shaw is a successful photographer living in New York, USA. He photographs a diverse range of advertising campaigns worldwide. One of his recent campaigns was for the insurance group Aviva. This campaign features the largest black and white portraits on buildings ever seen and will be run all over the world, in Malaysia, Dubai, New York, London and several other places. A movie was taken of the shooting of the campaign.

### **6.3.9. Paul Fishlock**

Paul Fishlock is currently the Creative Director of The Campaign Palace in Sydney, Australia. He has been working in the advertising industry for over 30 years as a copywriter and creative director. During this time he has worked on just about all categories within advertising. In the last 15 years he has become immersed in anti-tobacco advertising through a series of campaigns at a national and state level. He has done a lot of government-funded campaigns, in particular health and social marketing around various diseases. With the anti-tobacco campaigns Paul Fishlock worked extensively with the government on the anti-tobacco campaigns in the late 1990s. More recently he has worked on a large-scale advertising campaign for the Cancer Institute in New South Wales (NSW), as well as Quit Victoria, through their company's Melbourne office.

### **6.3.10. Paul Yole**

Paul Yole is the Head of Strategy at the Brand Agency in Perth, Australia. This means he is involved in all the campaign planning for clients. He has been in the business for over 30 years with varied experience in social marketing and brand specialisation. He has worked on many anti-smoking campaigns and a wide variety of health promotions.

### **6.3.11. Rolf Zimmermann**

Rolf Zimmermann is the Managing Director of Spillmann/Felsner/Leo Burnett in Zurich, Switzerland. He has been working in the advertising industry since the 1980s. Rolf Zimmermann was co-founder and partner of the company Spillmann/Felsner/Leo Burnett in 2002. He has worked in all stages of customer service, strategic planning, selling and presenting advertising campaigns.

### **6.3.12. Sarah Ingram**

Sarah Ingram is Senior Vice President at GolinHarris in Los Angeles, USA, a public relations and communications company. She is on the consumer marketing team and responsible for the communication and public relations of the Montana Meth Project, which is used as a case study in this thesis. Sarah Ingram has previously worked as an independent consultant in public relations



and the communication industry as well as a Senior Vice President for the Rogers Group (Public Relations and Communications Industry).

#### **6.3.13. Thomas Grace and Gary Clarke**

Thomas Grace is the Business Manager at Leo Burnett Sydney. He has been working for Leo Burnett since 2008. Previous jobs included sales and marketing for Bally, a privately held company in the apparel and fashion industry. He studied at Charles Sturt University finishing his degree with a Bachelor Arts, Communications Advertising and a Bachelor of Business, Marketing, in 2008.

Gary Clarke has been working for Leo Burnett for the past 5 years. He works directly with the art director.

#### **6.3.14. Tom Richards**

Tom Richards is the EVP, Director of Client Services at M&C Saatchi in Los Angeles, USA. He looks after all client services aspects and with the CEO. He has been working in the advertising industry in the US since 1996, with clients such as TiVo, Expedia and currently with the San Diego Zoo, Beverly Hills Visitor Bureau and all current clients of M&C Saatchi Los Angeles.

### **6.4 Summary**

Chapter IV has shown the thought process of how the research was approached and implemented. The steps have been explained as to how the major framework was extended, building on the background information. By giving a detail problem statement the research approach and procedure established a solid grounding for the research analysis and discussion.

This chapter has further established the credibility of the interviewees: it shows a variety of highly experienced advertising professionals, whose opinion and knowledge of the industry will allow in-depth understanding of advertising practices.

## *Chapter V*

# **Compiling the research**

## **7 Qualitative Research Analysis and Discussion**

The research discussion includes the analysis of the case studies, showing different types of shock advertising and adding to the discussion of its definition as well as to the discussion on consumer effects. This has been thematically organised within the same framework of the background information in Chapter I and Chapter II, expanding on the themes as described within the Implementation section. This chapter will combine all aspects of the research, highlighting the differences between theories.

### **7.1 Visual Analysis of Case Studies**

For the visual analysis of the case studies, a wide variety of images were chosen, ranging from highly confrontational, hard hitting advertising, “sex sells” and images which appear to be more pleasant, at least at first sight. All of these campaigns can be defined as shock advertising for various reasons. They will show the breadth of what can be seen as shock advertising, adding to the definition of what shock advertising is or can be. Some of the following campaigns have been banned in countries such as Australia. The analysis will focus on the target audience, the context the advertising campaign was set in, and its “shock” message.

### 7.1.1. Calvin Klein



Image V-1 Calvin Klein Campaign, Jeans ("Australia has banned the advertising Calvin Klein Jeans," 2010)



Image V-2: Calvin Klein Campaign, Jeans ("Calvin Klein Jeans spring 2010 ads," 2010)



Image V-3: Calvin Klein Campaign, Jeans (Doherty, 2010)

*a. Intended goal of advertising campaign, message communicated by advertiser*

Calvin Klein (CK) is a fashion brand selling clothes, especially known for its underwear and jeans. The main goal of a fashion brand is to sell their merchandise to make profits.

*b. Where was the advertisement published*

These campaigns were billboard advertisements, displayed in many major cities including New York, Sydney and Melbourne from 2010. However, they were subsequently banned in Australia, the UK and the US, which will be discussed within signs and symbols (Boone; Shaw, 2010; Zimmermann, 2010). Due to their location in major cities, these campaigns were visible to a large portion of people of all ages.

*c. Sociological phenomena*

The demographics of the models in the advertisements are the same as the target audience. The models are representing the target audience, trying to appeal to their lifestyle and sell jeans.

Calvin Klein's target market spans from teens to young adults, 14-27. This includes high school and university students and early job seekers. This age group has a high interest in fashion and wants to buy not only clothes, but a lifestyle such as the one Calvin Klein portrays. As the fashion from Calvin Klein is slightly more expensive than the more generic brands, the target audience needs to have a certain amount of money to spend on fashion, thus indicating a higher-level income and social status.

*d. Socioeconomic classes*

The lifestyle of the target audience is very much fashion driven or looks driven. Boys and girls, especially in large cities, pay a lot of attention towards their appearance, seeking the lifestyle represented by the CK campaigns. They are open for experimentation due to their younger age, which is all about exploring themselves and the world around them.

*e. Overall design of advertisements*

The overall design of these advertisements is fairly simple. The only clothes that the models are wearing are Calvin Klein jeans, confirmed by the text, Calvin Klein Jeans.

The typography is sans serif, very simple. It tells the consumer what is being sold and names the brand. The simple type resembles the design for which CK is known. This is unified with the colour range, establishing a pattern with a slightly sombre effect.

The tonal ranges of colours within the image are murky and earthy, losing their brilliance due to the amount of grey within the colours. This allows the people within the image to slightly fade together with the background. The jeans however still stand out as the blue of the jeans contrasts to the body colour, which is of an orange tonal value. The dull complementary hues have a sombre effect. The colour. The white colour of the type contrasts to the imagery, establishing a hierarchy, as the white stands out. However, as the type is only relatively small and thin it does not grab the immediate attention.

*f. Signs*

On a denotative level, the images show several young adolescents who are lying on couches or on the floor. The models are half dressed, positioned on top or next to each other, with a high level of body contact. The eyes and mouths are only half open or closed. The models facial expressions can be seen as indifferent towards their environment. They are calm, normal and relaxed. There seems to be a certain amount of observation between the models and what they are doing. No intimate body parts are visible as such or being touched. A boy is touching the inner thigh of a girl in one picture, whose legs are fairly wide spread.

There is a very strong connotative meaning communicated of sex and sensuality, possibly even an orgy, given the high level of body contact, the lack of clothes and the number of people in two of the images. Further the degree of indifference within the models facial expressions, can be interpreted that this is a normal scene. They are relaxed within the environment as this is familiar and they are feeling comfortable.

Whilst the models are looking rather relaxed within their environment it also triggers the response of shock and indecency. People have even gone so far as to say these images are condoning rape, especially in the picture where there are three boys and only one girl. While the female does not look like she is unhappy or trying to defend herself against the males in the picture, assumptions may be made depending on the cultural and personal background of the consumer.

These advertising campaigns were banned within Australia for their suggestiveness of sex, sensuality, rape and violence (Boone; Shaw, 2010; Zimmermann, 2010).

Further analysis can argue that the images are purely suggestive and do not show any act of sex or violence, but are entirely harmless. People kiss all the time, so that cannot be seen as a problem.

The anchorage lies within the text of this campaign, which is purely and simply the branding of Calvin Klein Jeans, suggesting that the jeans are the focal point.

The implied narrative within this campaign is about what lifestyle you can buy. Calvin Klein Jeans can enhance your sex appeal and make you sexy and wanted. Within today's society sex is ever present, especially in advertising. This is CK taking advantage of the concept, sex sells.

*g. Summary*

This campaign (Image V-1 Image V-2 Image V-3) communicates through the suggestiveness of sex. It challenges moral and ethical beliefs through the signs of body contact, implying sex. The morals challenged range from sex before marriage, to the idea of sexual openness, kissing in public or having orgies. This is confrontational and raises ethical questions. As the campaign is open to interpretation, and the interpretation depends on the individual, the problem of morals arise. In some countries Calvin Klein pushed the boundaries of what is ethically acceptable too far and the advertisements were pulled.

### 7.1.2. Diesel



**Image V-4: Diesel Campaign, Global Warming Ready "South Pole" (Holt, Jefferson, Parks, & Serenananax, 2011)**



**Image V-5: Diesel Campaign, Global Warming Ready "Mount Rushmore" (Wenzel & Lippert, 2008)**



**Image V-6: Diesel Campaign, Global Warming Ready "London" (Wenzel & Lippert, 2008)**

*a. Intended goal of advertising campaign, message communicated by advertiser*  
Diesel, just like Calvin Klein, is a fashion brand, selling clothing defining their goal to sell fashion with the highest profits possible. This advertising campaign won a Silver Lion for Print at Cannes International Advertising Festival 2007 (Duncan, 2007).

*b. Where was the ad published*  
These advertising campaigns were published around the world, including Canada, and in London and New York. It was a series of newspaper, magazine and billboard advertising, raising the heat with provocative imagery and topic (Duncan, 2007). As this was a large scale advertising campaign with high coverage not only in magazines and newspapers but also billboards, the audience viewing these advertisements was very wide spread.

*c. Sociological phenomena*  
The target audience of Diesel are young adults ranging from 17-30 years of age. Today Generation Y represents this target audience: born in the mid 1980s, just entering the workforce, technologically savvy and wanting flexibility in their daily schedules. This generation is in general culturally more liberal ("Calvin Klein Advertising," 2011; Kane). As with Calvin Klein the people in the advertisements match the demographics of the intended audience.

*d. Socioeconomic classes*  
The social status of the Diesel target market is young independent fashionable people. As Diesel is a more expensive brand, it is necessary for the consumer to have a high-income job to afford Diesel. They need to want to spent money on fashion. Diesel is most fashionable when money is no object. This indicates a higher level of education and lifestyle.

*e. Overall design of advertisements*  
The campaign design has been very consistent, using the same principle within each advertisement. Each contains the Diesel logo and the text, Global Warming Ready. The text indicates that Diesel is ready for what ever happens after global warming, and that Diesel is versatile enough to adapt to new circumstances.

The colours, due to their high saturation and value, appear very sharp and crisp, adding to a very clean image with high depth of field and perspective. The bold colours caused by higher tonal value, add high energy levels to the image. This



allows all parts of the image to be visible and identifiable. Within these advertisements there is more contrast compared to those for Calvin Klein. The contrast between the body colours and blue values, warm and cold colours, adds to the interest of the colours and sets a hierarchy. The hierarchy is established through the placement of the models, the white typography contrasting with the rest of the image, and the colour usage. However the placement of the typography gives it only secondary meaning. The models are all placed in the foreground, attracting the first attention. The setting of the models is in the background, making the interpretation of the context secondary.

These advertising campaigns are aesthetically very pleasing in comparison to other shock advertising. At first glance the images look pretty to the eye of the observer. They play on the idea of shopping with friends, a couple spending a day at the beach or just relaxing in the sun. These seem attractive activities to the target audience.

*f. Signs*

The advertising campaigns are far more complex, however. The first impression is a sense of misplacement. It is obvious that parrots do not belong in Rome, that New York is under water and a couple is sunbathing on the rooftops, and that Mount Rushmore is next to a beach (Image V-5) where a couple are putting on sunscreen. The models in each of the images are fashionably dressed.

The campaign has been edited very carefully to make the images look real and plausible. As the models are in the foreground, they are the first thing people see, not realising all the different signs and symbols in the background that indicate something is very different with this picture. Diesel creates a surreal image of the world. The connotative meaning certainly derives from the misplacement of signs within the campaign. Rome has become a tropical place for young ladies to go for a walk in the warm summer sun surrounded by parrots. Mount Rushmore is the new beach destination, to enjoy with your boyfriend under palm trees. Finally New York is surrounded by water and the rooftops are the new place to relax in the sun.

Although it is not as apparent as in previous advertising campaigns from Diesel, the use of the motto Sex Sells is still used within these advertisements. The use of stereotypical features - the male model putting sunscreen on the female's back -

is suggestive, while the way she is holding on to the palm tree and has her leg raised has a sensual look to it. However, it is not explicit. The same can be said of the image where the girl presses herself to the boy, holding him at the head and waist. She is making an attempt to get closer to him. Similar to the CK adverts previously described, the model's facial expressions do not show shock or a sense of misplacement. They look normal, their expressions reflect the 'naturalness' of the actions they are doing. There is nothing unusual to them, adding to the shock value of the campaign.

The anchorage adds strongly to the connotative meaning of the adverts. This is not only the Diesel logo to display the brand, placing the fashion in the foreground as the focus of these ads, the slogan Global Warming Ready sets the topic of the campaign, explaining that the world has changed due to Global Warming.

*g. Summary*

The campaign show the effects Global Warming can possibly have on life as the consumer knows it, creating a new picture. This further suggests that Diesel is ready for these changes ahead. It communicates the idea that with Diesel you will be always be fashionably dressed.

A further concept is to create awareness of Global Warming by shocking the audience with the impression of real scenarios of the future. These may look very pleasing at first glance; however, once having understood the concept, there is some shock value. The symbolic meaning of communicating that New York and Mount Rushmore are underwater, or that the South Pole is now a location for a swim is very provocative and confronting. It is left to the consumer to imagine the repercussions of what these images indicate.

### 7.1.3. Montana Meth Project



Image V-7: Montana Meth Campaign "You'll never worry about lipstick on your teeth again" ("Montana Meth Project About Us," 2009)



Image V-8: Montana Meth Campaign "My mom knows I'd never hurt her." ("Montana Meth Project About Us," 2009)



Image V-9: Montana Meth Campaign "Picking for bugs under your skin isn't normal but on meth it is" ("Montana Meth Project About Us," 2009)

*a. Intended goal of advertising campaign, message communicated by advertiser*

As this is a not for profit organisation the main aim of this campaign is to raise awareness of methamphetamine use and its consequences. Additionally the campaign wants to reduce methamphetamine use through its prevention program. To the observer's eye, however, the main aim is to raise awareness of the consequences of methamphetamine use.

This advertising campaign has won 50 awards including the Cannes Lions Award at the Cannes International Advertising Festival, and two Gold Effie Awards ("Montana Meth Project About Us," 2009).

*b. Where was the advertisement published*

The Meth campaign was and still is published in many States of the US, including print advertisements, billboards, TV advertisements, documentaries and newspaper publications. As with the previous advertising campaigns by Diesel and Calvin Klein, the advertisements are seen in public places and therefore the audience is very widespread. However, the target audience are methamphetamine users, who tend to be teens and young adults ("Montana Meth Project About Us," 2009).

*c. Sociological phenomena*

The target audience of the Meth Campaigns are teens aged 12 – 19 and young adults aged up to 25. The target audience is based on the fact that one out of 25 teens and one out of six young adults have tried methamphetamine at least once. The average age of the first methamphetamine use among Arizona teens is 14 years of age, and 65% of Arizona's child abuse and neglect cases involve methamphetamine. These statistics collected by the Montana Meth Project describe the teens and young adults who are most likely to be tempted to use methamphetamine ("Montana Meth Project About Us," 2009).

*d. Socioeconomic classes*

The demographics of the target audience are closely related to the sociological phenomena. These teens and young adults are tempted to use methamphetamine at a very experimental and vulnerable age. Very often these addicts come from lower social status and can be more likely to be exposed to drugs. There tends to be more experimentation and the idea of being cool at that age is still important.

The group pressure to do what everyone else is doing, such as taking methamphetamine, can be a reason for taking the drug.

*e. Overall design of advertisements*

The colours in this advertising campaign are very earthy, with darker shades. The colours are not shiny and crisp but murky and dirty. The type has the same scratchy and dirty look to it, emphasising that there is nothing glamorous about taking drugs. The white of the typography contrasts to the rest of the image, establishing a hierarchy supported by its placement in the middle, attracting the attention and standing out. The colour and the font communicate a unified message of the consequences of drug use: dirty teeth, lying in a filthy corner on a ripped mattress on the kitchen floor with broken glass all around. The hierarchy is further emphasised with contrasting messages. In two images - the mother on the kitchen floor and the young girl with rotten teeth - the colours around the main aspects are dark contrasting with the subject that makes them stand out and draw attention. In the third image the model fades in with the rest.

The aesthetic appeal in this campaign is not very high, but the point of the campaign is not to be aesthetically appealing. The advertisements are a reflection of the effects of methamphetamine use. The images are repellent, confronting and provocative. They are realistic to allow direct identification of the target audience with the models.

*f. Signs*

The Meth campaign has a very simple set up within their design, with few signs. The denotative meaning therefore is also quite simple. The people within the images have bruises, are sitting on the kitchen floor or on a filthy mattress. The people have blood on them, and rotting teeth. There are two settings: one is a kitchen covered with broken glass; the other is in a room that looks dirty, with torn wallpaper. The third image has no background (Image V-9). It is merely the picture of a face, with the teeth its focal point. It looks like a young woman. The images are very graphic and realistic.

The connotative meaning is suggested by the cuts and bruises on the models' faces, indicating violence and abuse. The glass lying scattered around the woman further supports this connotation. The boy is scratching himself out of a lack of control and helplessness. The surroundings suggest that the boy might be homeless, without money and living in a 'dump'. The cause of this can not

exactly be determined just by the connotative meaning but through the anchorage. This is also the case for the girl with the rotten teeth. The story of why she has the signs of violence written in her face is not clear without the anchorage.

The anchorage in these pictures is represented by the logo of the Montana Meth Project and a title sentence to each image tying in the denotative and connotative meaning to create the implied narrative. The type adds to the shock of the images, while the font represented is scratchy and dirty looking.

In the image of the girl with the rotten teeth the sentence 'You'll never worry about lipstick on your teeth again' (Image V-7) completes the implied narrative. The girl has been using methamphetamine, and as a result her teeth are rotting away. Even the use of lipstick will not hide the abuse to her body she has caused herself. There is no need to show the whole person. The teeth are enough to scare the target audience with one of their deepest fears: being ugly. Within the second image as well, the text clarifies the situation, anchors and tells the implied narrative: "My mom knows I'd never hurt her. Then she got in the way". The child abused the mother. She was hit and the surrounding pieces of glass suggest the throwing of china. Her own child, while wanting to help, defeated the mother because she got in the way and was a hurdle to overcome to get to drugs.

'Picking for bugs under your skin isn't normal, but on Meth it is'. The image's anchorage makes a clear statement about the effects of methamphetamine use. The boy is having hallucinations that bugs are crawling under his skin and is trying to scratch them out, bruising his body. The implied narrative is trying to frighten the audience with their fears of isolation, beauty, and family. These advertisements are not complex, as this allows for fast, easy and clear communication of the message, without confusion.

#### *g. Summary*

This campaign plays on the things that are most important for the mainly teenage target audience, to show what really happens if they take methamphetamines. The imagery is shocking, confronting, provocative and realistic. The success of this campaign demonstrates that shock tactics can work.

#### 7.1.4. Quit Victoria



Image V-10: TV ad, Quit Victoria Campaign (QuitVictoria)

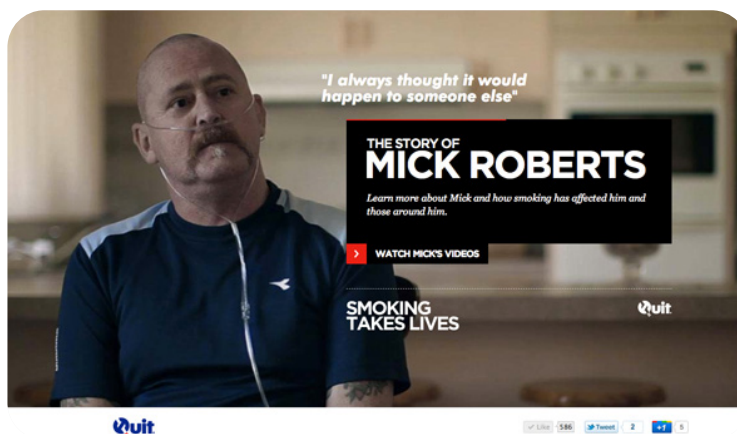


Image V-11: Quit Victoria Campaign “Mick Roberts” (QuitVictoria)

This campaign was chosen for its different approach to not-for-profit advertising, allowing for a different kind of shock again. One image is a screenshot from a TV advertisement; the other is a print advertisement in combination with a TV advertisement. This is not the same campaign, but both advertisements use the same approach.

The advertisement about the little boy is a television advertisement. The story shows a little boy at a busy train station with a woman. The woman is holding the boy by his hand and one can assume that this is mother and son. They walk

into the train station and then slow down at a staircase. They stand there, the mother holding her son by the hand. People are walking by. The next shot we see the boy alone: the mother has disappeared. The boy is standing by himself and is looking for his mother. He rubs his eyes and starts crying. A man's voice says: "If this is how your child feels after losing you for a minute, just imagine if he lost you for life." The scene ends and the Quit logo (Image V-12) appears with the number to call.



**Image V-12: Quit Victoria Logo (QuitVictoria)**

*a. Intended goal of advertising campaign, message communicated by advertiser*

The Quit Victoria campaign has the goal to raise awareness of the effects of smoking and convince their target audience to quit smoking.

*b. Where was the ad published*

This Quit Victoria campaign is highly television and internet video based. This allows for high coverage of these advertisements. They are all online, and run several times during the day on television, giving the advertisement maximum coverage. This allows exposure to all ages, as the advertising is targeted at smokers and these are represented in every age group.

*c. Sociological phenomena*

The demographics of smokers for these advertisements are very widespread. The advertisements need to target teens, young adults, adults, and the elderly, each with their own personal story. The campaign needs to be versatile enough to appeal as much to a grandparent in a retirement village as to an adult starting a new low to middle income job.

With these advertisement campaigns teenagers are not be targeted, as they cannot relate to the story so well. The models in these advertisements are not



representational of teenagers themselves. It is too far in the future for them to personally imagine themselves in this imagery.

*d. Socioeconomic classes*

The demographics of this target audience are very hard to describe. As the advertisement is targeted at smokers, it has a very widespread target audience. The demographics range from low to high-income people, just as the education level can be from high school to university, to apprenticeships, successful business people or the unemployed. Essentially the demographics provide the advertiser with information about the target audience to help them understand and appeal to them more directly. In this case looking for commonalities within the demographics is not so easy. What these people do have in common, however, are family and friends that they care for.

*e. Overall design of advertisements*

The general aesthetic appeal of this advertisement is not very high due to the use of colour and typography. Within both advertisements the colours have a grey tonal value, making this advertisement communicate in a sad, depressing and negative way. This is emphasised by the sad eyes of the models within these campaigns, not only the boy crying but also the man sitting in his chair. His head is leaning to the side and his mouth and eyes have a sad expression. The monochromatic colour choice adds to the colours blending in with each other, which adds to the negative feeling. A hierarchy is established due to the bold contrasting colours within the typography and the logo. They are of high tonal value in comparison to the image, which makes the message and logo stand out.

The typography within the print advertisement is sans serif, making it clear and easy to read. The capital letters highlight Mick Roberts' name. The quote above his name is read first, due to its positioning. The ad depicting Mick Roberts has low depth of field, which keeps the main focus on Mick himself in the foreground adding to his importance, as he is telling his story.

*f. Signs*

This image is very simply set up within its denotative meaning. Mick Roberts (Image V-11) is attached to an oxygen mask. He has tattoos visible at the end of his shirts sleeves. Mick needs extra oxygen to help him breath, common amongst

people diagnosed with lung related illnesses. Although his looks create the stereotypical picture of a hard man, now he is sitting in a chair with an oxygen mask and sad eyes, looking defeated by his own addiction: smoking.

The anchorage adds to this picture, and the implied narrative that he was a smoker, with the emotional appeal for others to learn from his mistakes. He never thought it could hit him, as the text reveals. However, smoking has changed his life and now he is sick and will most likely die.

Within the TV ad about the little boy (Image V-10), the surroundings are all in focus. This has the effect of emphasising the hustle and bustle around the boy. Lots of people are passing him, but no one is paying attention to a little boy by himself. The connotation of this setting is how lost a boy is without his mother. She was a smoker and has left her boy by himself, to grow up without any guidance from her. The anchorage of the Quit logo at the end gives the narrative a positive touch, the chance to change the future by quitting smoking. Using a child adds an emotional level to the advertisement, touching people where it hurts them most. It is not only about them but it is about the family they leave behind when they pass away due to their deadly addiction.

*g. Summary*

Both advertisements are very simple in their setup. This allows for fast communication of the message. In this case the advertisements are appealing to the humanity within every smoker. It is not only about them, but their family being left behind without guidance or help.

The shock within these advertisements is the consequence that smoking can hit anyone, and that you cannot only think about yourself, but also about friends and family. This tactic is playing on the personal emotional connections. What happens to loved ones once you are gone? These appeal to the humanity within each person, confronting, shocking and provoking smoking addicts to rethink what happens to the ones you love and leave behind.

## 7.2 Findings

These case studies have shown great diversity of the use of shock within advertising. Even though they have taken similar approaches the way they

communicate - fashion with sex appeal, couples and stereotypical features - while the not-for-profit organisations have easy, simple and quick communication messages, each of these campaigns has a different take on shock advertising. This includes graphic hard hitting imagery, provocative postures, sexual appeal, emotional humanitarian appeal, threat appeal and the confrontation with possible future consequences.

From this a further distinction can be drawn between the advertising campaigns. In a broader sense the shock effect can be differentiated between graphics and the narrative. Calvin Klein and Montana Meth use graphic imagery to create shock, in contrast to Diesel and Quit Victoria which create shock through the narrative.

Within all these advertisements it can be noted that the combination of signs, denotation, connotation and anchorage paint a picture to create the implied meaning. In the end, shock advertising comes down to one thing: the truth of addiction, desire, a potential future.

Can these appeals, whether graphic, emotional, personal or sexual, be identified as mechanisms of shock advertising? There are vital elements in the campaigns and the way they are perceived by the target audience. All appeal differently to the consumer, evoking a variety of emotions, but leading their thoughts into certain directions through the signs and symbols.

The analysis has described the background information for each campaign including details on target audience, sociological phenomena, socioeconomic classes, demographics and where the advertising campaigns were published. This information is vital to understand the advertisements concept and designs, as well as the thought processes that go into such a campaign by the designer.

## 8 Research Discussion

The discussion will compare the literature and the advertising professionals' opinions, allowing comparisons and discussion and offering answers to vital questions asked throughout the thesis.

### 8.1 What is shock advertising?

The word shock in the context of advertising evokes disturbing images or provocation of the emotions and reactions, as described in the literature. Shock advertising is seen as a deliberate tool, offending the consumer by challenging societal and cultural norms, distinguishing it from traditional advertising. When searching online for examples of shock advertising, the images that appear are highly sexual, pornographic, violent and provocative to say the least. The case studies have already shown that there can be different values to shock. They do not simply entail extreme pornographic or graphically violent imagery.

However, after conducting interviews and looking more at the marketing and advertising side of shock advertising the term starts to become unclear. What is shock advertising and how does the industry see shock advertising? Does the advertiser use shock advertising in the hope of gaining more attention from an apparently oversaturated consumer?

Most advertisers in the interviews asked what shock advertising is within the context of this thesis. However, by not giving them an answer, but letting them think about what shock advertising is to them gave a better insight into their practices. Over half of the interviewees gave answers that agreed with generic literature definitions. Amy Messinger (2010) summed it up as: "Messaging/visuals that go against societal norms or go beyond society's comfort zone." Florian Schwalme (2010) used the metaphor of fire: shock advertising plays with fire. It ignites highly sensible topics in society, blasting power to encourage new ways of thinking, which can have a commercial or non-commercial goal. These topics can include politics, religion or sex. Henning Mayer (2010) notes that these advertisements knowingly pass the boundaries to provoke, with the effect of building an image or brand.

The comments suggest deliberate use by the advertiser, a strategic move to encourage new thinking, confront or play on comfort zones. Fashion brands such as CK claim never to have used shock advertising as a strategy. However a Calvin Klein campaign where small children were photographed in their underwear raised the notion of child pornography. Although Klein strongly denied any such intention, the campaign was pulled (Schoolman, 2000). These practices do imply the deliberate use of shock, as these kind of images tend to provoke. CK has challenged core values of the representation of sex within public spaces.

At this stage it is important to recognize the relationship between advertising and the media. Media is described as technologically developed communications industry, making money, which can transmit information and entertainment across time and space to the consumer. The media is the means for communication and essentially for advertising, as advertising pays for media space to communicate to its audience and takes up an extensive part within this media space, whether it is on television, newspapers or other forms of media (O'Shaugnessy & Stadler, 2008). One can go as far to saying that due to the oversaturation of advertising in the media a co-dependency between the media and advertising has developed.

A media product does not show the real present world, it is merely a construction and re-present reality. It is created by certain groups of people who make sense of the world on behalf of society. Media has to win large amount of audiences to be viable, this is best done, by showing what the customer wants to see, or would like to see. Many people make sense of the world through media and their messages communicated (O'Shaugnessy & Stadler, 2008).

When looking at the idea of co-dependency of not only advertising but also shock advertising and the media it can be speculated that the misplacement of shock advertising is deliberate and as O'Loughlin (2010) mentioned, this helps to create shock advertising. These thoughts can further lead to the question of whether shock advertising can slip through the processes of regulation due to media power. Whilst this relationship between media and advertising is worth exploring further as it can possibly frame what is acceptable in advertising, it is beyond the framework of this research and could be pursued in another thesis.

As already noted, several advertising campaigns designed by CK were banned, not only in Australia, but also in the US. O'Loughlin (2010) says he does not think, "anyone intends to set out to engage in shock advertising". Brands and people try to push boundaries creatively, as they are targeting a very tight consumer set. Due to the nature of media it builds into other markets, which can change the audience and context of the campaign. O'Loughlin further supports the idea of shock advertising being a media construct.

What is a media construct? Within this thesis a construct is the picture the consumer has build up in their minds of what the world is and how it works. It is a model based on the sense people have made of their observations and experiences. A major part of those observations and experiences come to them pre-constructed by the media, with attitudes, interpretations and conclusions already built in. Media re-presents reality and that becomes our reality (O'Shaughnessy & Stadler, 2008). In this sense shock advertising is created through the re-presentation and the way it is done by the media, which mainly includes sensationalism.

Paul Yole (2010) supports the idea of shock advertising being a pure media construct as it sensationalises stories. When advertising purely sets out to shock, it is potentially doomed to fail, in his opinion. This suggests that media generates shock advertising due to sensationalistic nature of media.

However, the careful consideration to every aspect of a campaign requires every aspect to be perfect. Nothing can be left to chance. Every advertising campaign is deliberately designed and constructed to have an effect on the consumer. It is obvious that not every effect can be accounted for; however, it can be assumed that important aspects are considered. The context of advertising will be discussed in further detail within the next section (Chapter VI 8.2).

In direct relation to O'Loughlin's thoughts on sensationalism, Christian Fischer (2010) says that due to the "sexualisation of society hardly any taboos are still existent. This is now the theory, but every person still has a sense of shame. Nobody is running around the street naked or is dressing against all conventions". He further suggests that this sense of shame allows shock advertising to push taboos beyond societal norms. It is the sense of shame within people which allows the concept of shock advertising to work. Besides, it

constructs the sense of feeling uncomfortable with what you see (Anastasiadis, 2010). The uneasiness of advertising has the intention of disrupting behaviour and stopping people in their tracks, O'Loughlin (2010) adds. It was questioned during the course of this research whether ethical boundaries have been pushed too far, or whether they even exist. Shock advertising cannot evoke these kinds of feelings within the consumer without moral boundaries. It has become obvious that these moral and ethical boundaries are constantly in flux, changing and adapting. However, for shock advertising to work, they still need to be in place.

Paul Yole (2010) prefers to take a different approach to shock advertising.

"I prefer to call it a threat appeal. The theory in social marketing is if you threaten something bad will happen [it may convince people] to change their behaviour. Sometimes you need to shock people into paying attention by means of graphic images or something. But then it is more effective when you have some kind of positive resolution".

He further sets threat appeal or fear appeal into two different categories: inhibitory and anticipatory. Inhibitory fear is where, for example, a lot of blood is seen. The road safety campaigns (see example Image V-13) are a good example for this. It is graphically displayed like in a horror movie.



**Image V-13: Road Safety campaign by DDB Sydney ("Road Safety Campaign by DDB Sydney," 2008)**

Anticipatory is like an Alfred Hitchcock movie, where you know something will happen but you cannot quite see it. The equivalent in road safety would be an accident about to happen, you hear a bang and the screen goes blank. The rest is left to the consumers' imagination. Both these approaches can be effective as they either play with the consumer's imagination or confront with facts.

Not only Yole (2010) prefers to refer to shock advertising with a different term. Paul Fishlock (2010), who has been designing a series of campaigns for the Cancer Council, figures that these advertising campaigns are less about shock but truth tactics. "Real people are suffering from diseases and they are being told that they have these and it is having a profound impact on families and you know all this stuff is shocking, but it is like you are doing Freddy Krüger, we are trying to scare you, to scare you for the sake of it. We are trying to scare you, because we need to open your eyes to what is actually happening" (Fishlock). Fishlock uses the idea of truth appeal, which he further defines as scare tactics, just like Yole (2010) describes fear or threat tactics.

The terminology Yole (2010) and Fishlock (2010) use is interesting. They both refer to threat appeals not threat campaigns or threat advertising. Is it possible to say shock advertising is the media constructed term; however, according to the advertisers, certain subcategories need to be established? This possibility is supported by case studies which all display different types of shock value, whether it is sex appeal, fear appeal or threat appeal. These appeals were all used to cause shock, controversy or provocation with the aim of raising awareness and calling for action. The main goal of these advertisements is to change behaviour. It is apparent that shock advertising calls for action in a more forceful way, through the use of these different tactics or appeals.

Shock advertising has many faces. Pushing the idea of threat appeal from Yole and Fishlock can further refine the previously established mechanisms of shock advertising within the visual analysis. The Montana Meth Project campaign, as well as Quit Victoria use graphic, hard hitting imagery and the threat appeal of possible consequences to change the target audience's behaviour. The Diesel campaign, Global Warming (Image V-4 Image V-5 Image V-6), can also be seen as a threat appeal, the threat of global warming occurring if society does not change its habits. From an industry point of view one could say that part of shock advertising is to scare people into changing their behaviour, using threat appeal.



The Calvin Klein campaign used within the visual analysis can establish another appeal, sex. This can further be interpreted as not only “sex sells”, but rather than using threatening consequences, which are negative, suggesting the positive consequences and sensual ideas of sex.

For example, O’Loughlin suggests driver safety campaigns as one category, which in broader terms can also be called not-for-profit advertising or PSA (Public Service Announcement) advertising. Changing driver safety around the world is a serious issue. We need to do something that is going to shock people out of their comfort zone. Steve Anastasiadis (2010) says the budget of smaller philanthropic “brands” means that they have to make those few seconds on air work to have their voice heard. It would be irresponsible of the advertisers not to make a message so confronting that it stops people in their tracks. O’Loughlin (2010) has been involved in the Adults Surviving Child Abuse (ASCA), campaign where they did just that. He uses the example of a campaign they created: “We had a Dad standing up at a wedding happily talking about the last time he molested his daughter, as he was giving her away to her husband. That stopped people, prompted a radio interviewer from Perth wanting to talk the advertisement and the number one reason for doing that was using the confrontational nature of the issue, putting it in front and centre in peoples’ faces.” Through the confrontational nature of this advertising campaign the most important goal was achieved. Awareness for ASCA was raised and people were picking up the phones seeking help.

The other category O’Loughlin (2010) describes is niche or smaller clients. Within this research it can also be called profit-orientated advertising. This has already been mentioned, that shock advertising is more likely to be used by smaller companies, offering them a more effective way of cutting through an oversaturated market. O’Loughlin expands on this, explaining that large companies do not feel comfortable putting themselves out as much as the risk is very high. When you look at shock advertising it is a sort of a niche market, smaller players. The entrepreneur, is the owner of the company, runs the company and makes the decisions. These are people who do not have much to lose and do not have the budget compared to big corporations. Those smaller players need to do something to get attention. A car accident gets attention; however is that a good thing? O’Loughlin (2010) does not think so. When the advertiser has a brief, there is a product that needs to communicate something,

connect to people and talk about how good the product is. It is harder to be honest than to shock people. However, going back to what Tom Richards mentioned, when shock advertising suits the product and it makes sense, it can be an effective strategy.

Amy Messinger (2010) adds that it depends on the brand. Some brands define themselves by shock and others by being anti-conformist. Those brands use or consider shock advertising, as they need to shake consumers into thinking something new. However, when brands have nothing shocking about them, it does not make sense for them to use shock advertising. Consequently when the brand or the product is defined as shocking or has appropriate usage for shock, it is a suitable technique to use for their advertising. This idea is supported by the literature; for example, women are more likely to respond to sexual appeals when there is a strong fit between the advertisement and the brand, but not when the fit is weak (Putrevu, 2008). Sexuality or sensuality and lingerie, for instance, would make a suitable match between brand and advertising approach.

So where is the connection for fashion brands like Diesel, Calvin Klein or Benetton to use shock to sell fashion? Benetton wanted to be considered a socially responsible brand; that had nothing to do with their fashion. One can argue that CK or Diesel are selling a brand image. The advertising campaigns reflect the sensuality and sexuality that the clothes will give the consumer when wearing them. Fashion has direct impact on the visual appearance of people and how they feel. That appearance and feeling is projected within the campaigns.

Another issue mentioned by O'Loughlin (2010) is: "what is shocking is to one person may not be to another". Advertising campaigns are created with thoroughness, especially the analysis of the target audience. Who will see this advertisement? Demographics and their analysis are done by advertising agencies to establish the core strategy of an advertising campaign, which includes the placement of a campaign within the media. However, once the media gets hold of a campaign, it can also appear within different settings that cannot always be anticipated, especially with the internet making all information highly accessible. Once a campaign is taken out of context, what does this mean to its shock value? The context of any advertisement can have a profound influence on its impact.

What do other advertisers say about shock advertising and its existence? Tom Richards (2010) does not know how to define shock advertising with only one definition, as the same word can mean different things. Shock advertising is completely dependent on what shocking is, which is completely dependent on the target and brand. Richards underpins this thought through examples of video games. When one has a violent video game to advertise and the use of violence within the campaign is representative of this game, it makes sense to do so. The target audience buying these violent games will not feel offended but attracted to the advertising. However, because Richards agrees with this from an advertising perspective does not mean he is morally fine with it. This shows the personal and professional conflict that advertisers can go through. The advertising of certain products may be against personal moral and ethical standards and beliefs.

Christian Fischer (2010) and Paul Yole (2010) clearly stated that there are certain taboos and boundaries they would not cross within advertising. Paul Yole works for The Brand Agency and would not do advertising that supports smoking. This is a personal and company decision, as they do not want to be identified with advertising that has a negative effect on people. For Christian Fischer a personal taboo is crossed once an advertisement depicts a person being killed. He says that there are several successful advertising campaigns where men jump off mountains or cause accidents because they turn around to look at a woman. This does not reflect creative advertising.

The advertiser does have the freedom, according to Yole (2010) and Fischer, to decide when boundaries will be crossed and whether the agency wants to be identified with this or not. This is a similar problem for agencies as it is for brands. They have to stand out against large, international agencies. Stretching boundaries or expanding them beyond societal acceptance not only gives attention to the brand, product or service, but also to the agency. It can gain publicity and differentiate them from other agencies. However, it still remains a personal, societal and professional ethical conflict. Companies also have their own ethics regarding company policies. This is an open-ended debate that each professional has to have with him or herself.

In contrast to the other statements from advertisers, Rolf Zimmermann (2010) goes as far as to say that shock advertising in this sense does not exist. "What is shock advertising? When models sway fur coats whilst they walk down the

runway, with blood leaking out and spraying the audience!?” Zimmermann refers to a classic example from Benetton which used a picture of a newborn baby.



**Image V-14: Benetton, Newborn baby campaign (Wenzel & Lippert, 2008)**

Zimmermann has three children and seeing a photograph like this of a newborn baby (Image V-14) was the most natural thing in the world to him. Why would it be called shock advertising? “But what does that have to do with selling jumpers?” Benetton is a fashion brand. What has a newborn baby to do with that? “I do know what it was about, Toscani was solely interested in creating talk through the use of certain things, such as babies.”

“In this generation, what the advertiser is trying to do”, says Grace, “is find what motivates consumers to change behaviour.” The differences are how effective the advertisements are; even if they are shocking and people talk about them, it does not necessarily motivate them to change their behaviour. Is it enough, can the advertiser connect with the consumer in a way to motivate them to change their habits. “Everyone says that PR is good, that any talk is good, but is it good enough to make people change or do you have to connect with them more? A bit more understanding might be all that is needed to achieve that, which is why we do not need shock advertising.” Grace (2010).

There was discussion about the exploitation of people displayed within the advertising campaigns by Benetton, with the goal to make money. Is it okay for Benetton to use controversial images and make money from societal issues?

The worst that can happen is that people are apathetic towards your advertising campaign; 99% of advertising leaves people apathetic. Creating buzz, talk and attention is good advertising. Polarising people and being conspicuous is a goal of advertising, says Zimmermann (2010). But this has to match the product and contents and not leave the consumer asking the question “what are they selling?”.

A good example from Steve Anastasiadis (2010) is that reinvention and shock go closely together. The advertising industry often likes to refer to non-advertising examples, like Madonna. “She went out, just when you thought you knew Madonna. She went out and shocked you. Then hang on, that’s new, she does that reinvention and that shock is the example we use in reinvention. Every time she reappears people are shocked and say ‘Is that Madonna?’” To take this back to the context of advertising, the reinvention of a brand can be so different that it is shocking. It does not need to be sexual, graphic or fearful: changing dramatically can be just as shocking.

Christian Fischer (2010) mentions a campaign that turns the tables on another level. A brand of handbags had a campaign with highly sexual images in a nightclub to attract a large younger audience. For the season starting January 2010, a girl is playing at the beach and has the four bags (the product) lying in front of her. In contrast to the nightclub scene, now there is a sudden idyllic setting at the beach. The shock for this advertisement is not using shock advertising. Sometimes it is very clever to turn the tables and do the opposite, as nobody will expect it.

There is obviously a lack of definition within the industry about shock advertising. While it has several different aspects, there is one commonality. Shock advertising wants to sell products or raise awareness in an unusual way to grab the attention of the target audience, or more importantly change the consumer’s behaviour.

In contrast to the literature, the industry professionals suggest that shock advertising is not deliberate. The terminology shock advertising is questioned, and a preference for threat appeal expressed. While some interviewees accept the term shock advertising, the use of appeals seems to be more appropriate or accepted: using threat or sex appeal, for example, which can incorporate several different mechanisms.

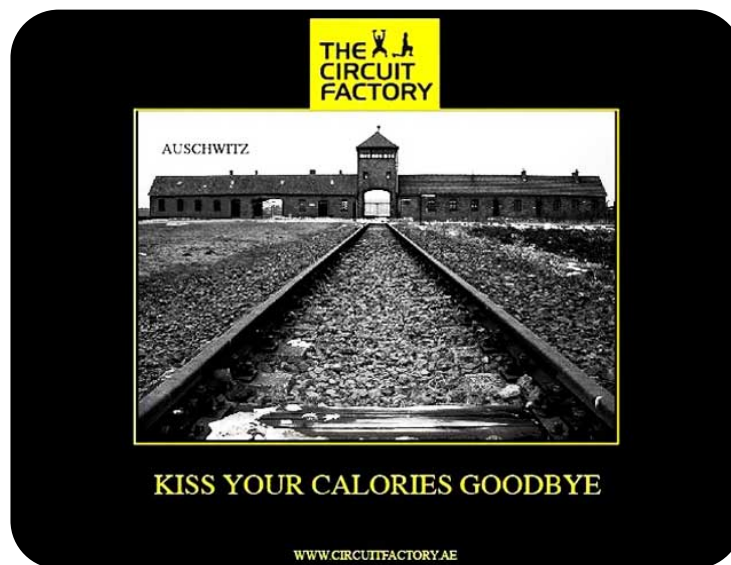
## 8.2 Context of advertising

The context further influences the definition and consumer perception of shock advertising. What is shocking to one person might not be to another. The context of advertising defines the impact it has on the consumer. Does the campaign stop them in their tracks, as O'Loughlin asks?

Yole (2010) backs up the importance of context, as it is a very important consideration for the agency within any campaign, he says. He goes on to explain that you have to think of the total context and environment in which your message is appearing and that it is not just geographic areas but demographic as well. A big city versus a small city is one thing, and so is the chosen medium.

If the agency "is going to have something fairly graphic we know that we will be told that we cannot run that ad before 9.30 at night. So we better make sure that we reach out target audience at that time. (Yole, 2010).

Christian Fischer (2010) raised a campaign previously mentioned, AIDS is a mass murderer. Fischer says the campaign would still exist if it had not used Hitler. "It is always the same; any kind of comparison with the Third Reich is an absolute taboo in Germany". However, there are a lot of international campaigns which use Hitler.



**Image V-15: Auschwitz slimming ad. Gym places in Al Quoz, Dubai ("Fitness-Studio in Dubau wirbt mit Auschwitz-Foto," 2012)**

Image V-15 is an example of a campaign using Third Reich references in 2012. It is in very poor taste, not only for those from Germany. The founder of the fitness gym was forced to apologise. He posted a series of promotional images on the internet including this photograph of the notorious Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz. The slogan "Kiss your calories goodbye" has implications that go beyond shocking or offensive. An estimated 1.3 million people were starved and eventually killed in this concentration camp between 1942 and 1944. In his apology the founder of the gym stated that it was not his intention to offend anyone with the campaign. The Anti-Defamation League acknowledged his apology but is far from happy ("Dubai Gym apologizes for using Auschwitz to promote weight loss," 2012; "Fitness-Studio in Dubau wirbt mit Auschwitz-Foto," 2012; Moran, 2012).

Fischer described campaigns in newspapers in South America using references to Hitler to sell condoms.

Anastasiadis (2010) notes that what is shocking in one culture is not shocking in another. Within one culture, a message is understood as humour. Once taken out of this context, it can be seen as very confronting, such as the Auschwitz campaign in Dubai. With multinational companies and the internet this takes on an entirely new relevance. Anastasiadis (2010) says that the world is one world

now, and it's small. For example he mentions a McDonald's campaign, where it seems that McDonald's is encouraging gay kids at high school to come out. Whether they should or shouldn't is not the issue: the fact that the advertisement gives that impression becomes the issue. The press picks up on it and it starts to take on a life of its own, in the world media. As media picks up on controversial advertising campaigns, research suggests the media does sensationalise these campaigns, suggesting the concept that shock advertising is a media construct.

Returning to the case studies, Calvin Klein advertising campaigns have been displayed on billboards in the midst of New York, which are highly public spaces. Richards (2010) says imagine if you took this campaign and put it, for example, in Raleigh, North Carolina, not near the University but somewhere in the suburbs. This would not work: the advertising would not match the demographics and therefore not appeal to the audience. The chances of turning off more people than you turned on would be very high. Richards (2010) mentions several other fashion brands, like French Connection UK. The first time he saw their name he read the word fuck, but it is fcuk. Richards (2010) "I would not wear a shirt with that on, personally I think that is in poor taste. I do not think less of a person who does. Would I do this as a marketer in this environment? Yes, probably as it is smart work."

Victoria's Secret is another example where some controversy has been created by a change of environment, according to Richards:

"I don't know whether this is shocking or not, supermodels dancing in fairly tame underwear. Yes they are beautiful supermodels and to be honest, it is shocking that it is on during the Super Bowl half time show. I am not entirely sure how it worked, but it was in the half time show when they had a lingerie show, a 15-minute commercial for Victoria's Secret. Everybody knows that the half time show is really lame at the Super Bowl, so people got smart about it and put alternative programming on at that time. So is that shocking? I think for some, given that the Super Bowl is a family affair. It is the only program that gets half of America watching." (Richards, 2010).



Setting Victoria Secret's into a different environment made the brand provocative, as the Super Bowl is a family gathering of young and old. This means that young children could have been watching a lingerie show. That is certainly at least a little offensive to a certain number of viewers. Fundamentally shock advertising is based on the shock value of who is receiving the message. So as Richards (2010) describes it, a prudish grandma sees something that might be incredibly shocking to her, that would be incredibly commonplace to somebody in their thirties. Even simple things can be a problem, such as wearing a tank top. In summer in Perth it is entirely normal, however in many other places, such as Thailand, for example, this can be shocking as one needs to cover up when entering a temple.

The context or the environment has an immense impact on what is perceived as shocking due to the reliance of shock on the cultural and societal values, ethics, morals and demographics.

### 8.3 Desensitisation of the consumer

The literature has shown that the idea of desensitisation has been developed for a while, especially in relation to threat, sex and violence on television (see Chapter II.3.2.1 Desensitisation of the consumer pg. 51). So why has this research not been extended to advertising? Steinberg (2003) was already worried about the effect of desensitisation. Advertising effectively sees the immunisation of the audience. This suggests that shock advertising has developed and become more provocative to gain and keep the attention of consumers who have become desensitised over the years.

However, Amy Messinger (2010) does not agree with the concept that shock advertising is necessary to attract the consumer's attention: "There are several break-through campaigns in the U.S. that do not rely on shock at all. In fact, most of the break-through campaigns here do not rely on shock advertising. I think break-through is about finding a unique idea that is true to the brand's DNA and is relevant to the consumer". Paul Yole's (2010) opinion is very close to that of Messinger. He does think that the consumer is getting immune to certain advertising campaigns (in this case referring to not-for-profit advertising), but there are different ways to pose that threat. Advertising does not have to be more

provocative to cut through the clutter of general advertising, but advertising does have to provoke a response somehow. It just has to make a very clear point to provoke a response. "Usually you have to appeal to people's emotions, whether that is fear or whatever. So you ultimately have to cut through memorability and all those things, but you have to engage people in a way in your message. So provocative in that sense, yes, but not in a controversial sense. There is a lot of advertising out there that most people don't care about. But you can provoke a response by being humorous or by being romantic and that can be provocative because it provokes emotions." An example Yole (2010) gives, is a road safety campaign in Britain to get people to wear seatbelts. You saw people sitting at home with their family. They used a very different approach, which was very emotional but not using the threat appeal in a graphic sense. The threat was about losing your family; it was more importantly very engaging in a gentle way. It still shocked and certainly stirred the emotions because of your family, as you do not want to put yourself in that situation. However, it was a different kind of shock or threat.

The case study from Calvin Klein, contrary to Amy Messinger's opinion, suggests the desensitization of the consumer. Calvin Klein's early advertisement with Brooke Shields (Image IV-1 pg. 101) was shocking and highly debated for its sensual appearance. Looking at CK development and the advertisements in the case studies, the Brooke Shields campaign from the 1980s seems like a normal image. CK has shown how advertising has changed and become more provocative. Thomas Grace supports this observation: "It is funny because that stuff ten years ago was probably shocking back then, and now someone slapping you in the face is no biggy, now someone gets stabbed." He agrees that the consumer is being desensitised. "Think of general media, what's on TV, what's on the news. The fact that we are on the internet, you can watch people get killed, you can watch Saddam being hanged. Ten years ago you were not able to see that, now all these videos get leaked onto the internet. Gary Clarke adds, when he was watching the first Saw movie, that it frightened the life out of him, now he is not even fazed by them.

"Nothing shocks New Yorkers anymore!" This statement by Patric Shaw (2010) adds the twist of context to desensitisation. He goes on to say that it never really did, because New York City is a big melting pot with different people from different backgrounds. Each immigrant to the city brought their own beliefs and

their own view of how they see the world, which he considers a good thing and what the city is about. Not only does the context in which advertising is viewed matter, but also the degree of desensitisation depends on the context. New York has a high exposure to a number of advertising campaigns. Times Square is plastered with billboards and as Shaw says, the multiculturalism mixed with the overflow of advertising has made New Yorkers indifferent to a large amount of advertising.

There is a clear tendency for those in the industry to agree with desensitisation; however, the need to claim the consumer's attention through shock advertising, thus causing desensitisation, is not thought to be the case. There are other ways than just shock to desensitise or to reach the consumer. Paul Fishlock (2010) thinks there will always be people who will consider advertising too graphic, and there will always be some who say it is not graphic enough. To reach a balance between desensitisation while still provoking a reaction from the consumer is, as Yole (2010) describes it, like a balancing act that is bound to go wrong. One can never make it right for everybody.

## 8.4 Self- Regulation of shock advertising

The literature questions the effectiveness of the system of self-regulation, going so as far as to call it a toothless tiger in Australia. When asked about the effectiveness and power of self-regulation within their countries, there was a clear consensus among the interviewees, of a preference for self-regulation over a statutory regime or government involvement. This was in agreement with the literature.

As John Manfredi ("Self-Regulation and Advertising: Surviving the global challenges ahead," 2009) stated, it is imperative that consumer trust and confidence is upheld. Otherwise it is impossible to establish any type of relationship with the audience. Consumers will question any advertisement and their judgement will become even harsher. The voluntary system allows more freedom to advertise responsibly and avoids restrictions and bans that can cut creativity within the industry. It is understandable that a system of government regulation is not considered to be in the best interest of the advertiser.

Florian Schwalmé (2010) also refers to the power of the consumer. The consumer has the possibility to control advertising. He explains that advertising is allowed to exaggerate and tell marvellous stories, but is not allowed to lie, not only because it is wrong, but because it triggers a boomerang effect in today's information society. In the past many things stayed concealed but today everything can be researched, checked or proven wrong. Clients communicate via the internet. Whoever thinks their target audience is stupid and does not communicate with them squarely in the eye, is digging their own grave. This is the reason Schwalmé appreciates measures to protect the consumer, most importantly children and adolescents. Further, and most interestingly, he adds that the power of the consumer is greater than ever before. Organised consumer protests are far more effective than any statements from Brussels or self-regulatory bodies.

Shaw (2010) comments on fashion advertisements and the CK ads from the case studies from the position of a photographer and a father. These images are teenagers in their jeans, and that's all. It is the imagination that is telling the consumer what is happening or what is going to happen, it is not necessarily happening. Not approving of these images is like a parent speaking to their child and saying you know that I do not approve of this and it is not good for you and leave it up to them. However, this does not mean that these advertisements should not be seen."

Richards (2010) also assigns a fair amount of control of regulation to consumers in the US. "If you say something stupid that people do not like, they are not going to buy your product, so advertisers are not going to say what people do not like." That being said, there are 310 million people in the US, with 310 million opinions. So with advertising campaigns such as CK they will be inappropriate in a lot of places, but a marketer will know that and avoid those environments. He says that the sensationalist media will get worked up over controversial advertising and it will be the sensation for the day, but this will move on.

Richards (2010) goes on to reject any more government influence, and notes that the larger networks have standards and practice departments which advertisements have to pass through. For example, Richards once designed a TV commercial depicting a big house party: the parents were away, and a teenager threw a big party, with a band getting thrown in the pool. Throughout the

advertisement are high school kids holding red plastic cups, which are affectionately known as keg cups. For this reason one of the networks rejected the advertisement as it was suggesting that the teenagers were drinking alcohol. There was no keg, no alcohol and no apparently drunk kids. They just look like they are having a lot of fun. Yet the network said no, after spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to make this commercial. The network will only look at an advertisement when it is finished and then tell you whether it will run or not. If there was a body to approve these advertisements before, in some cases millions of dollars are spent, that would be great, says Richards. However, this has only happened to him once in 15 years in the industry. Usually advertising agencies have a very clear idea of what they are able to get away with and when they have gone too far (Richards, 2010).

David Mallen (2010) from the NAD in the US also explains the networks' own internal standards. There are certain guidelines and regulations concerning taste and decency and what can appear. Additionally particular industries have their own internal codes that touch on issues of taste and decency and socially appropriate messages. For example, the alcohol industry has some fairly careful guidelines put in place on how, where and when you can depict people consuming alcohol.

The voluntary system of self-regulation to Mallen (2010) is not as impotent as some critics in the literature describe it. The bodies of the system of self-regulation make recommendations, which request modifications or discontinuation. These can be quite detailed, sometimes even including a lot of analysis and testing. Companies will comply with these recommendations at a very high rate, over 95% of the time. "This does not mean the companies agree with the recommendations, but they will follow them for several reasons. Number one, as stakeholders in the system of self-regulation they want them to succeed, they want to be able to challenge their competitor, they want to play so to speak. Beyond that thought there is an added incentive. If a company does not comply, we (the NAD) take the matter to the federal trade commission or to whatever appropriate government enforcement agency there is and take the matter seriously. It is very likely that the federal trade commission will take some action that can be very serious, even leading to court proceedings. Companies do not want that, generally they will comply with the recommendations." The second issue is publicity. The NAD makes all findings public. Once a

recommendation has been lodged these will appear in a press release and the public gets informed about what is happening. If a company does not comply with the recommendations, this will also be mentioned within the press release, which can make a company look very bad, adding a further incentive for the companies to comply with the recommendations.

Messinger agrees with Mallen (2010), as she sees the system of self-regulation as effective for the reason that companies have decided to self-regulate and do a good job at following their own guidelines. It would not be in the interest of a brand to break these guidelines as this can alienate the brand from the industry. This indicates peer pressure, as no company wants to separate themselves from the rest of the industry in terms of fair play or truthful advertising. Does this mean that peer pressure within the industry allows the system to work?

Yes, for large companies there is an incentive to follow the guidelines and self-regulate. Being alienated from the industry can further generate negative publicity.

Mallen (2010), too, thinks it is important that self-regulation is in place to regulate taste and decency, he would not want to see that in the hands of the government imposing itself on the marketplace. However, he likes the idea of companies showing stronger social and ethical consciences to the point where those that do not have this kind of conscience will be punished in the marketplace. Unfortunately he feels this is unrealistic, however the government being the arbitrator of taste and decency is not the solution either.

So how can taste and decency be regulated effectively? Who should be the judge about when advertising has pushed the boundaries too far? Fishlock (2010) admits that there are areas where the rules are not clear. There are balances, such as the Trade Practices Act, to prevent from making false claims, but to do the right thing in regards to taste and decency, these areas of uncertainty need to be explored. Judgement on appropriateness sometimes needs to be made as to whether advertisements are offensive. Broadly talking about the effectiveness of self-regulation, Fishlock (2010) points out that there are still things that slip through the net, however, more approvals and legislations would not be a good thing. The metaphor of a net is very appropriate, as the holes within this net are not only created through gaps within the system but also exploited by the advertiser. By the time consumers have complained and the complaint has gone

thought the regulators, the advertiser will have gotten away with it, because controversial advertisements gain a lot of publicity and media attention. This can even be a calculation to design advertisements that breach social boundaries to gain publicity.

As David O'Loughlin commented, small advertising agencies have little to lose. They push the boundaries further than others to gain more publicity and media attention. This creation of buzz works for them, even if it is only temporary. Larger corporations have too much to lose, which does not allow them to go to such measures. This is the reason the voluntary system of regulation works. The large companies run the risk of losing not only profits, but brand integrity and public reputation. They need consumers to return and they may not. As Schwalme says, the consumer still has the power, and if they refuse to buy products or services from the company that is most damaging.

Advertising agencies have systems in place to avoid issues of self-regulation in the first place. The Brand Agency sends their advertisements for an opinion first. Yole (2010) explains that this is a way to avoid complaints. However, if a complaint is received it is a serious matter and treated accordingly.

Despite all this, sometimes the agencies still want to push the boundaries, because they want to provoke a reaction. Yole (2010) says "We do what is in context and aren't irresponsible about it". In this case Yole is referring not only to what is responsible within the system of self-regulation, but what is ethically and morally responsible with the agency's rules and guidelines. When using shock or as Yole (2010) calls them threat tactics, the strategy still needs to be in line with company values, as well as agency values. Sometimes this can be difficult as the client wants to do something more edgy and the agency is uncomfortable with it. A decision needs to be made by the advertiser. These decisions need to be in line with corporate policy. For example, the Brand Agency does not take on advertising for cigarette manufacturers (Yole, 2010). They could do political advertising, but to Yole (2010) it is his personal preference to stay neutral. Richards puts it in a different way in relation to not-for-profit advertising: "it is not about what my target will accept, but what am I comfortable with".

By gathering opinions, having company and personal ethical or moral guidelines, and the context of the target audience, defines for the industry what can be called acceptable advertising. These steps add to the effectiveness not only of a campaign, but also to the regulation of advertising.

Taking into consideration the personal corporate policies and the self-regulatory system, Yole (2010) is of the opinion that the system is working as well as it can. "One can get different opinions on whether something should be banned or not, but basically it is working as well as in any other country in the world".

Within this section different aspects of self-regulation were discussed, especially in regards to effectiveness. Even though there are gaps and discrepancies as Fishlock described, there is a clear consensus between the theory and reality, that self-regulation works as well as it can, and is certainly better than government regulation. This allows more freedom for advertising agencies, and the consumer. The opinion of the industry is that the consumer still holds a large amount of power, which can be seen within recent history. Consumers boycotted Benetton, which had a great effect and stopped stores from selling Benetton fashion. However, the question arises, is this still the case today? especially considering the desensitisation of the consumer. The consumer does not pay as much attention towards advertising anymore, whether in regards to imagery or the overall message. It is fair to say that history has shown that the consumer does carry the power; however, the indifference of the consumer means that this power is not used anymore.

#### **8.4.1. Who complains**

Whilst conducting research on the system of self-regulation one important question was raised: is it the target audience complaining against the advertising campaign? It is not always the consumer who the advertising is meant for who is complaining, but other sections of the public. However, as the advertisements are not intended for them, what does this imply?

According to Yole (2010) any panel should take into account who is complaining. Mallen (2010) observes that there is a clear tendency for extremist groups to complain within the US. These can include religious extremists and feminist extremists. While this does not mean that a complaint from an extremist group is



not as valid as any other complaint, the panel has the responsibility to think about the general audience, whether it is appropriate and fits general viewpoints rather than the views of those complainants. So if somebody complains, it gets looked at in context of the complainant's point of view and from the general point of view. General views will differ from one country to another and this needs to be taken into account.

Fischer (2010) sees it as a positive thing, when a campaign gets a complaint from the consumer, because it is a reaction. However, it is likely that the consumer is not happy with the advertisement, as the need to communicate when an advertisement is not well perceived is higher than the other way around. One has to check very thoroughly where the complaints come from. As long as one has the feeling that for the targeted group the campaign is successful, one has to be more tolerant of criticism and does not necessarily need to make any changes. Patric Shaw (2010) adds that it is not only important to be aware of who is complaining, but also that racist complaints, for instance, are more frequent than one would expect.

Extreme groups suggesting they are protecting their children from inappropriate advertising most often lodge complaints. Even though the advertisements are not meant for them they have the right to complain, especially when displayed in public spaces. When advertising campaigns are in private spaces this argument changes. In most cases no action is taken other than an apology.

Richards and Mallen (2010) mention more problems within the US and describe the UK system as far more effective. The ASA makes clear decisions and sends out clear signals to the industry. The advertising industry does not have its creativity cut, whilst still maintaining an effective system of self-regulation. Could part of the UK system be implemented within the NAD? This would allow a voluntary system but make improvements.

Even though every complaint is important, it has become clear that if it is not the target audience complaining, less attention is given and it is less likely that anything is done about the advertising campaign unless good reasoning is given. This is understandable as large amounts of money are spent on every advertising campaign. Advertisers cannot afford to just dismiss a campaign without exceptionally good reasoning. This does allow the question of whether one

opinion is more important than another. Is it more important to change an advertising campaign if the target audience complains? Although this needs to be asked, it does not seem to be the case. The advertiser is well aware of the repercussions of their advertising campaigns and unanswered complaints. The complaints may be treated selectively within the advertising industry, but these decisions are handled with care.

## 8.5 Profit vs. Not-For-Profit Organisations

The idea of separating profit campaigns from not-for-profit was drawn from the literature review, which indicated clear differences between the handling of profit versus not-for-profit advertising. O'Loughlin (2010) also established two categories of shock advertising during the interviews supporting this separation. One was not-for-profit, for example driver safety campaigns; and the other was identified as a niche market or smaller clients, which I refer to as profit-orientated organisations focusing on, for example, the fashion industry, as these companies have the goal of a profit.

Anastasiadis (2010) says that shock advertising in the fashion industry has reduced considerably as a result of massive holding companies buying and owning a large amount of these brands. Suddenly the brands are not able to do what they used to or what made them unique and successful, as they need to stick with the new corporate guidelines. Despite Anastasiadis' observation that shock advertising within the profit orientated background is very minimal, the media exposure is great and therefore strongly in the public's eye.

In contrast, Amy Messinger (2010) states that there is no such thing as two categories within shock advertising. She refers to these as types of corporations or organisations. Christian Fischer (2010) distinguishes this further as a product that needs to be sold and a product that is not supposed to be sold anymore (unselling a product).

Within this discussion the consideration of the term social advertising will be explored. The advertisers to not-for-profit advertising mentioned this term, however, it is not described within the literature, opening a gap that needs to be filled.

### 8.5.1. Profit advertising strategy and perception

Within this research, profit advertising focuses on the fashion industry, as they have demonstrated to produce a large amount of shock advertising campaigns. A major issue of these campaigns is the sex and sexuality used, which triggers a lot of discussions. There seems to be less acceptance for pushing boundaries in comparison to not-for-profit advertising campaigns. Yole (2010) agrees with this: “ads where it comes to sexism and sexuality are more of a problem than social threat advertising”.



**Image V-16: Sisley Fashion Junky, Zoo Advertising Shanghai China ("Sisley Fashion Junky," 2007)**

This campaign by Sisley (Image V-16) has at least an idea to it, Richards (2010) thinks. He believes it is more interesting if the brand has something to say. “They are using a tone or a type of advertising that is actually attempting to get a point across, and it is important “ (Richards, 2010).

Yole (2010) feels large sections of the population will be alienated by the CK billboard advertisements, as these campaigns are accessible to everyone. If these advertisements stayed within the target audience who will understand the CK messaging these advertisements are fine; however not on billboards in public spaces.

In contrast to Yole, Anastasiadis (2010) states that the fashion industry has a license to do that. The consumer responds in a different way.

Benetton was mentioned several times by the advertisers as the frontier of shock advertising. Shaw (2010) did not believe that it was necessarily true that Benetton was exploiting people or social issues to sell their sweaters, as previous discussions have suggested. He describes a further example of a campaign for an insurance company, VIVA, that he was working on in England. The company wanted to change the way that people consider insurance, particularly the way the American health insurance is known to let people die when their policies have run out. What they wanted to do is to build a new image of helping people, even if they have made mistakes with their insurance policies.

“VIVA is in the business of making money, not all they have done is good, but they helped out in France when a hurricane hit. So there were actual cases where they were able to help out. These large corporations want to add a human element, a human face to show that they are still part of the public. We care about people who buy our sweaters, for example. United Colours of Benetton, people from different races are appreciated. Their message is about caring, especially the HIV ad that had some fire in it, and yes they make sweaters. That is it.”  
(Shaw, 2010)

Anastasiadis worked with Toscani in Europe. Toscani put Benetton on the map, he says; they evolved through Toscani's vision to say this company has social values. The environments and circumstances of the time allowed doing that and designing radical fashion. For Toscani, however, the values and messages he wanted to communicate became his enemy and he pushed the boundaries too far, with his last “Death Row” campaign for Benetton.

“At the end of the day they went down due to the brand awareness and the fact that it was not considered a global brand.” (O'Loughlin, 2010). It became global because of fame very, very quickly. The values communicated were true values to the public at first, but then the values were diminished, and it became about driving volume and that never works. Especially when using shock, disturbing

or confronting material to push your values and in the background drive volume, something is bound to go wrong. The consumer sees through this quickly. The formula of trying to deliver value through confrontation to drive volume will never work. It might have a short term effect, but will never be a long-term strategy (O'Loughlin, 2010). Where is the line to stop, when have the boundaries been pushed too far, even when it is about social advertising, raising awareness and the attempt to have a positive effect on society?

History has shown that the consumer reaches a boundary; however, "the line" in today's culture seems blurred. As Fischer said, society still talks about taboos, and as long as this is possible, boundaries are in place. Where they are, is another issue.

Fishlock (2010) sees real merit in what Benetton was trying to achieve, however, it is quite different to show a dead body when you are selling jumpers in comparison to showing dead bodies and trying to stop people continuing a habit that could kill them. Using Fishlock's example of anti-smoking advertisements, the message has a relationship with the end result and the goal of changing a habit through shock, scare, or threat tactics. Just as Messinger (2010) says, the brand has a relationship to the product, or in this case the goal. However Benetton, or Diesel are using the same tactics, which have nothing to do with the brand or the product. They are using it to sell fashion; that is the message that will be in the consumers' minds predominantly.

While there is a need for the creative to be creative, the designer still needs to consider that he or she is creating advertising that is new, on the edge but should not be pushing the boundaries too far. Clear messaging and purpose of the branding need to be communicated to make the consumer help accept the strategy used.

Whatever the perception is towards companies such as Calvin Klein and Diesel, they have become brand icons and successful fashion brands. Paul Fishlock (2010) mentions French Connection UK, a classic example of putting FCUK in great big letters on a billboard. "In some ways every schoolboy will think it is a great campaign, as it flaunts the rules. We can do what we can get away with because we are called French Connection United Kingdom. This makes the

acronym FCUK legitimate.” It clearly worked with that brand as it has certainly made it a brand icon.

Complaints against these companies, whether it is Benetton, CK or Diesel, show that boundaries are still in place. It does not matter whom complaints, by lodging complaints, to agencies as well as the public, can be seen as a reminder that certain boundaries should still be in place. Further emphasising ethics and morals to be upheld.

### **8.5.2. What is not-for-profit advertising?**

Social advertising is not to be confused with social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Within the context of this thesis, social advertising can be called not-for-profit advertising. It is carried out by organisations such as charities, foundations, associations, hospitals, orchestras, museums and religious institutions when they advertise for patients, volunteers, members, donations or other forms of participation. Advertising agencies often donate their time and effort for these organisations or reduce their fees considerably (O’Guinn et al., 2009).

Not-for-profit advertising, from the advertisers point of view, are advertisements created with the goal to raise awareness, change habitual behaviour in the target audience or raise funds for organisations. Some advertisers refer to them as Public Service Announcements [PSA] (Clarke, 2010; Grace, 2010), as these types of advertisements are predominantly concerned with public health, such as smoking, consumption of drugs or alcohol, speeding and animal and human rights, to name the common. These advertising formats have developed to engage the audience in a social context and try to convince the viewer to adopt, for example, healthier habits.

There is no clear definition for social advertising. This is a personal working definition based on a combination of suggestions by the literature, overlapping ideas of social advertising and not-for-profit advertising and comments made by interviewees. Yole (2010) uses the term social advertising interchangeably with not-for-profit advertising. He adopts the name within the context of advertisements carrying a message that will profit or help society, such as road safety, anti-smoking or cancer campaigns. It is important to remark that the main

difference between social advertising and not-for-profit advertising is that social advertising purely refers to advertising with the intent to change addictive or negative behaviour in society. It has nothing to do with profits or whether agencies are paid for their designs.

### **8.5.3. Not-for-profit advertising perception and boundaries**

Social and shock advertising research suggests that there is a difference in acceptance and perception by the consumer. This is based on which advertisements attract complaints and the difference in consumer behaviour, especially towards not-for-profit advertising. There is a sense of a different perception by the consumer once advertising targets social issues and tries to change negative behaviours.

Christian Fischer (2010) agrees with the concept of the consumer perceiving profit advertising differently from not-for-profit. "Topics such as drugs and alcohol can pull entirely different tactics. Even despite self-regulation they can do this. Benetton may be a company where it worked for a profit organisation, but nobody would do it nowadays. The risk is just extremely high."

Messinger (2010) believes that shock advertising fits some brands and does not fit others. When it is appropriate for the brand, then the boundaries can be pushed regardless of whether it is for-profit or non-profit. Consumers will allow a fashion brand to push the limits in a way they will not allow a laundry detergent brand. Consumers expect PETA (Image V-17) to push the boundaries in a way that they will not expect from United Way.



**Image V-17: PETA “If I can Dream” (Mbariekt, 2010)**

Even though it is expected from PETA to push the boundaries, this is due to brand building. PETA have created an image towards their “brand” that fuels this expectancy, which is also the case with Benetton, CK or Diesel, as well as government road campaigns. The companies have established brands by using shock advertising, which is responsible for the expectations of the consumer.

Anastasiadis (2010) added that if there is no connection between the brand and the purpose, there can be no connection for the consumer, “no long term building equity at all. A campaign will appeal to some people but what is it that I am saying?” When the question is asked what was the advertisement for, you know you have failed completely.

O’Loughlin (2010) noted that the tolerance level of a consumer is dependent on the current things a consumer is doing. Whether they are on the internet, doing their online banking, chatting on Facebook, relaxing and watching some television: the tolerance, mindset or parameters by which an advert is judged is in accordance with what the consumer is doing. O’Loughlin and Anastasiadis (2010) agreed that they would not think of using the same strategies in car advertising as in alcohol advertising. The advertisers just would not go there.



Schwalme (2010) worked on a not-for-profit campaign for the Ministry of Transport in Germany. This campaign included the combination of client, message and relevance, which he feels should be essential to good advertising, but is not often seen anymore.



**Image V-18: Runter vom Gas, German safe driving campaign (Verkehrssicherheitsrat, 2010)**

This example by Schwalme (Image V-18) incorporates shock on an emotional and personal level, as well as the strategy to personalise the advertising campaign to appeal to the responsibility towards the people in the car, family and friends. It is a reflection of reality and how quickly things can go wrong, which makes this advertising campaign shocking; in contrast to the PETA campaigns, the approach is more subtle, however, just as powerful, if not more so. In Schwalme's eyes, Runter vom Gas (Image V-18) meaning to slow down, is an example of advertising with a shocking effect. The shocking images and messages are not constructed, but taken directly from reality, without the expense of a third party. This is also a direct example for defining shock advertising with an emotional and personal appeal exclusive of shocking imagery.

Greg Clark (2010) thinks that what was shocking ten years ago certainly is not shocking anymore. This is partially due to changing ethics and an evolving society. He uses the example of a UK campaign he remembers from ten years ago. The campaign was for Tango, an orange fizzy drink. The line was "you have been tangoed": as soon as a can of Tango was opened, an orange buddha type character, painted orange head to toe, with a pair of orange pants would appear. He would come out, slap the person in the face, tango with them and say "you

have been tangoed". This advertisement had kids in school and people in offices slapping each other. It was a big campaign. Thomas Grace (2010) says that it was shocking ten years ago that people were slapped. "Today, it is not a problem anymore, people don't get slapped in advertising, they get stabbed, or killed".

Thomas Grace thinks that a lot of the awareness campaigns for smoking and cancer just do not hit home anymore; people feel uncomfortable and simply change channels. Some of the campaigns are still good and still shocking. Grace thinks the government's "Buckle Up" campaign is good, with the passengers mid-air in the car. The seatbelt campaign has the consumer more involved, as it plays more on their own imagination, as does Schwalme's example *Runter vom Gas*, Image V-18.

Interestingly Grace (2010) makes the comment about negative attitude created by smoking advertisements, which make people uncomfortable and therefore create negative attitudes. This raises the question of whether the perception of the consumer has to do with the attitude within the advertisement. O'Loughlin (2010) describes the advertising campaign where the father at his daughter's wedding is making a speech about how he molested her. It is a happy environment, everyone is listening to the father's speech of the father, and the advertisement was creative with what appeared deceptively as a positive attitude to a very severe crime.

O'Loughlin (2010): "We had a lot of complaints. People saying we should not talk about those kinds of things in public and the fact was because we were talking about it in public we had people's awareness. Did we make everyone happy? Absolutely not. Did we have a lot of complaints? Yes. Did the brand suffer? I don't know. but did people pick up the phone to ACSA? Absolutely."

The shocking element within this advertisement was the twist of setting such a serious topic in a positive and happy environment. So the goal of raising awareness was achieved regardless of the complaints or confronting nature. In this instance, social boundaries were crossed, even though it was a not-for-profit advertisement raising awareness to a serious topic.

"If one life can be saved through shock, the means justify the end." Anastasiadis says.

"That is such a good point, that means everything. The thing about the media, which is disappointing and is becoming increasingly disappointing, I think is that the media are picking up on what is a lunatic fringe. Media report that there is a complaint about something. Sometimes the ASB will pick up the complaint. Someone says we are taking a double line in ad, we are not but you still have to respond to it. The way the media reports for sensationalism is sometimes our best friend because we get more publicity and for a PSA any publicity is good publicity, but the point is, often what you are hearing in the general space is a very small portion of people who have an objection when most people will see what you are trying to do and appreciate what you are trying to do. Yet the media report will be in favour of the, what we call the lunatic fringe. Generally most people we find are very understanding of what we are trying to do and they are pretty tolerant to the message when the message is brought to you that that is a really good cause." (Anastasiadis, 2010).

Anastasiadis makes two points here: that the media reports on sensationalism, reinforcing the idea of shock advertising being a media construct. But more importantly he notes that more tolerance is displayed by the consumer when it is about social advertising or advertisements that are for a good cause. There is general consensus within the industry: the consumer is more open to provocative advertising when it has a social benefit. This can be expanded to the need for companies to do more socially responsible advertising as it creates a positive corporate image which adds to the positive perception by the consumer.

Yole's (2010) opinion counters Grace's, as he believes that health campaigns, for example anti-smoking, have to be on the provocative side, as people have become immune to these messages. The target audience does not want to be told how to run their lives. You have to give them a reason to draw them away from

their habits. This is firstly by establishing a point of empathy, according to Yole (2010), and then to grab their attention. Within this genre it is even more important to cut through the desensitisation of the consumer.

Fishlock (2010), who prefers to call it “truth tactics”, expands on the connection an advertisement can have with the consumer, especially in relationship to anti-smoking advertising. Fishlock (2010) recognises the smoker’s natural reaction, to reject anti-smoking advertisements.

“They think they have seen all of those ads and would rather change the channel; however, they clearly register that they have seen them and it has made a profound impact. They can often recite all the messages, but at the same time tell you they never watch the ads. We are telling people things they do not want to hear. If this is your habit, if you are addicted to tobacco and you tried to quit but failed, you still know you should quit. Your self-efficacy is low, your self-esteem is low and you do not want to be reminded of all this. So the consumer would prefer to change the channel” (Fishlock, 2010).

It is understandable that people don’t want to be reminded of their addiction. Some people may have to face the reasons they started in the first place, which they might want to avoid. Another reaction, Fishlock (2010) explains, is self-exemption. The consumer watches the ad finds a “chink in the armour” and they conclude: that’s not me. That person talked about heart disease, obesity. Therefore that person got heart disease because they ate too much KFC, which has nothing to do with cigarettes. Fishlock (2010) describes this as a well rehearsed strategy for smokers, which is the case for most drug addicts, as to why the advertisement is not true for them. Advertisers work very hard to draw them in, to add things that are personally relevant. This will connect the consumer and the advertiser, as Grace describes it.

However, Fishlock (2010) outlined an advertisement that establishes this sort of connection, but adds shock to it, to attempt to change the addict’s behaviour. Fishlock says that even smokers have to admit to recognising themselves.

“I’ve done that, lit the cigarette off the stove and that’s not a good look. I have stood outside a building on a windy day just to be able to have a cigarette, yes that could be me. Then when we go inside the body and discover whatever diseases there are while carrying that kind of personal relevance that could be me too. Certainly a lot of behavioural economics and psychology goes into these things” (Fishlock, 2010).

All that said, Fishlock points out that anti-smoking advertising is changing, as the consumer has been educated about the consequences of smoking. The move is now to further educate them about how to quit smoking and to help them to quit. An example of this is the Quit Victoria Campaign in the case studies. These advertisements shock people about the consequences; however, they also go on to give them the necessary help to quit as well, through the Quit Victoria number.

Yole (2010) also agrees on the need to engage the consumer with the advertisement through imagination and identification, as the message will be communicated more effectively and be more powerful. More and more these days when using the threat appeal the advertiser tries to have the consumer anticipate everything, if it can be framed along with a positive message.

In relation to creating a positive message, Yole uses the example of his own agency.

“We had a campaign last year for the “Alcohol. Think again” campaign, which involved a party where the drunk person bumped into a pregnant lady: she was knocked onto the corner of something and ended up miscarrying. It is quite graphic and disturbing for some people. That was accompanied with the message, you need to take control...” (Yole, 2010).

When using any kind of fear appeal the agencies need to understand what they are doing and be very careful. The advertisements need to show a way out of the situation, which adds the positive element that Yole (2010) talks about, such as the examples of the new developments in anti-smoking advertising, showing the consumer help and a way out of their situation.

Shock tactics that are implemented with a fundamental truth or fundamental message for any kind of social campaign or health promotion, need to bring their message to people's attention with care. This way the consumer can relate to the message, connect to the advertisement and perceive it in the way that it is intended to. That would be the perfect situation for the advertiser. Unfortunately that is not always the case. O'Loughlin (2010) suggests if you watch someone with Down's syndrome get on a bus and sit next to a random passenger, you see how uncomfortable are, and it shows the true nature of people. This sort of lack of tolerance and acceptance can be mirrored in advertising to show how unfair it is.

Thomas Grace, however, complains that when these government advertisements are run through the self-regulatory body, they can push them through because they are a government organisation. They can push boundaries so far, but when an advertising agency attempts to do so, it is not possible. The bar of what is shocking to the consumer is raised so high because of desensitisation. The question the advertiser has to ask himself is: what can we actually do that is acceptable to the self-regulatory body and will actually make it on air?

David O'Loughlin (2010) offers a completely different perspective. "There is a reality behind the industry that you should be aware of," he says:

"We take on these pieces of business, PSA for no gain, no profit most of the time. If we were going to do work for no gain, there should be some benefit for us and that generally comes in our ability to be more creative. Being more creative in a PSA...means probably being more confronting. So if we have a piece of business come through like the Pedestrian Council we have the liberty to push it and that helps us because generally industry recognition comes from high creativity and this is the

kind of business where we can sometimes push the boundaries a bit... So I would not necessarily say we do not win awards from those mainstream clients. But the ability to really push it and show you are a leader in the industry comes from PSA."

This insight opens entirely new ideas to the thought of desensitisation. Not only does it show that not-for-profit advertising is advertising to help society through raising awareness and helping people find help, but it also allows the advertiser to shine in a new light. They are able to use full creativity and ability to design advertising campaigns that represent them as an agency gaining respectability.

## 8.6 Summary

The discussion highlights the lack of a definition of shock advertising. During the research several possible ways on how to define shock advertising appeared, from calling it threat advertising, or the concept that shock advertising is purely a sensationalised media construct. The advertising industry's opinion varies even on whether shock advertising exists, or is purely an overall term for using several threat, sex or personal appeals. Directly impacting on shock advertising's definition is the context, including the placement of advertising, whether in public or private spaces. The context is not only important to consider when conceptualising and designing advertising campaigns, but also important in how the consumer accepts and perceives any advertising campaign.

The provocative nature of shock advertising allows disapproval, however, the increasingly provocative media has had some effect on the consumer. The industry generally agrees that desensitisation has been occurring. The consumer does not take action as much anymore against unacceptable advertising due to desensitisation. They no longer feel as easily offended.

Once an advertising campaign is not perceived positively the consumer can take some action. Self-regulation comes in place. Even though the literature has shown clear gaps and discrepancies within the systems of self-regulation, the advertising industry agrees that even though there are areas without clear ruling and the system could do with some improvement, it is better than a government or statutory regulation. One major gap within the system of self-regulation is due

to the separation of profit advertising vs. not-for-profit advertising. Not only is there a difference in perception by the consumer between profit and not-for-profit advertising but also in regulation. Advertising with a social benefit is more acceptable by the consumer and therefore allows for boundaries to be pushed further.



## *Chapter VI*

## **Conclusion**

### **9 Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study makes a contribution to the understanding of shock advertising, in a broad and global context, whilst recognizing shifts and discrepancies between the theory and practices of advertising.

The research took both expected and unexpected turns. The aim was to explore the gaps and discrepancies between theory and practice of shock advertising, based on an assumption within the advertising industry that there is a gap between theory and practice. It is a commonly held idea that these two are opposed to each other. It seemed that the theory was detached from actual experiences. However, the research showed that theory and practice are not opposed to each other, but are entwined with each other.

The literature and discussion chapter showed the connection between the issues of shock advertising, the consumer and self-regulation and how one interlinks to the other. Each of these aspects has an influence on how advertising is perceived within the global context and advertising practice.

The fundamental question, what is shock advertising, should have been easy to answer, but developed into a major part of the investigation.

## 9.1 Redefining Shock Advertising

So what is shock advertising? Is it, as the literature describes, a provocative way of advertising, challenging the consumers' social and cultural beliefs? Or is it sensationalised by the media, completely out of proportion, or not exist at all, as some of the advertising industry have said?

Reflecting on the research, shock advertising has demonstrated to be a group of advertising strategies. It does exist, even though its existence has been questioned. Shock advertising does challenge taboos of a social, cultural and personal nature.

The name shock advertising, as the advertisers say, has developed through the media sensationalising advertising campaigns. Within this cluttered media environment it is not hard to see how this occurs. However, the definition is a combination between theory and advertising practice and both have merit.

Just as in advertising, shock advertising has the purpose of making people change their habits, to provoke change. Shock advertising pushes the boundaries of ethics and moral standards within different cultures and societies. It goes beyond comfort zones. To use Schwalmé's metaphor (2010) it plays with fire. The case studies have shown, that it can have many different faces. Advertising campaigns do not have to be graphic, or depict nudity or death to be shocking. The images can confront the target audience on a personal, emotional level, which can provoke a change of habit. These are the mechanisms of shock advertising, or, as others call it, as threat appeal or threat advertising. These mechanisms incorporate, threat, sex, truth or fear appeals to create shock and promote action by the consumer. It is the need to shock people out of their comfort zone that creates advertising strategies.

It is important to remember how shock advertising works. As described by Yole, it is the difference between anticipatory and inhibitory advertising campaigns. In the context of this research it can also be called graphic or narrative. These terms summarise the essentials of how shock can work. Anticipatory or narrative adds the further involvement of the consumer, as their imagination is needed to add meaning to the campaigns. The inhibitory or graphic campaigns are factual. These are the core elements or mechanics to the industry practices of how shock advertising works.

As O'Loughlin and Anastasiadis described in during the Discussion Chapter, reinvention and shock work closely together, if you want it to. They used the example of Madonna, who reinvents herself regularly and shocks people with her new appearance. Lady Gaga is a similar example. Within advertising, this can be just as effective and work the same way. Changes of brand imaging whether it is becoming extreme or becoming more "normal", the change in itself can be regarded as shocking and again be a strategy of shock advertising.

The research has demonstrated the significance to drawing on knowledge of social context and location context. This has direct impact of the shock value of advertising on the consumer. With the evolving global media, especially the internet, advertising campaigns can easily be taken out of context, which can make them more offensive or less, depending on where it is seen and in which context. This further allows the sensationalising of shock advertising by the media, taking it out of context.

The study has explored the idea of social advertising as a term that could be used interchangeably with not-for-profit advertising. However, these terms still have significant differences. Social advertising does not have to be not-for-profit. Further research, needs to be conducted into the meaning of social advertising. This study opened a discourse into its meaning and usage within the advertising industry.

No matter how much it is defined and how many examples given, shock is personal. Understanding shock advertising has led to a very simple and important point: shock value is dependent on the consumer, each individual and their context. So many different aspects that can only be broadly grouped influence the consumer and individuals, ranging from morals, demographics, location, to cultural and political views. Knowing the audience will consequently add to the effectiveness of the advertising campaign. Depending on which scale a campaign will be published it is essential to understand cultures and their ways of life, to implement and use the advertisers advantage. Not only is it important to know general demographics, but shock advertising is targeted at a rather small group of people that details such as when where and how the advertising is received plays an important role. Not everything can be calculated; the mood of a person when seeing advertising will influence the receptiveness, which is not within the advertisers ability to calculate. Therefore what is shocking to one

person is not shocking to another. Any advertising campaign can only target a certain section of the population. There will always be people who do not agree with a campaign, whether it has gone too far or not far enough.

The question 'where is shock advertising placed within the objectives of advertising campaigns?' was asked earlier within the thesis. Although this study is focusing on shock advertising literature and practices, it is important to acknowledge the marketing industry in which advertising has its main role. Shock advertising in this context can be defined as a strategy which incorporates further mechanisms to achieve advertising and marketing objectives and goals. Whether shock is used knowingly or not, it is part of the strategy used to fulfil the advertising objectives. This is the reason that shock advertising needs to be acknowledged within advertising. Feel good, image, anxiety, repetitive advertisements all have different objectives, that suit one brand but not another. Shock works within the same principle and further incorporates many of the already accredited advertisements (Figure II-4 Advertising and its objectives). Reflecting on comments made by the interviewees, big corporations want to keep the status quo with the consumer; while smaller players have less to lose and subsequently push advertising further to challenge the consumer and get their attention.

## 9.2 Theory vs. Practice?

At the beginning of this research there seemed to be a convincing split between advertising theory and practice. This was due to the contradictions between literature, statistics and the practices one can observe in regards to shock advertising and self-regulation. However, during the research process it became very clear that there are more levels of understanding to advertising theory and practice.

The system of self-regulation has demonstrated to be filled with gaps, discrepancies and areas of uncertainty. There is an unresolved and acknowledged dialogue. However, rather than a split between the theory and practice of the system of self-regulation, there is an understanding between the two. The advertiser acknowledges that there are questions and scepticism within the system, however, the alternatives are not acceptable to the advertising

industry or to theorists. There is a dynamic relationship between the literature and industry that reflects an unspoken understanding between the two.

This understanding leads to acceptable self-regulation of larger corporations. These larger companies cannot afford to push boundaries and offend their consumers. However, it is questionable whether it is desirable to keep things the way they presently are with the consumer. Advertising practice has acknowledged a desensitisation of the consumer, making them harder to reach. To overcome this issue, the advertising industry has to push creative boundaries further to communicate with their target audience effectively.

One area where this has been done successfully is not-for-profit advertising, which extends to social and PSA advertising. When reviewing the research it can be observed that there has been a shift occurring within this category of shock advertising. During the late 20<sup>th</sup> century Benetton, Calvin Klein and Diesel used shock advertising on large-scale advertising campaigns, including billboards and posters. However, in today's advertising world, it is less the fashion brands that use controversial images, but predominantly social advertising and not-for-profit advertising campaigns in which shock is a feature.

This shift is partially due to desensitisation: it's not only the consumer who is not aware of advertising campaigns, but the media as well. The boundaries of acceptable advertising have shifted, and less attention is given to campaigns by fashion labels.

The research also explored the extent to which advertisers try to compensate for this desensitisation. Creativity is still the key especially when it comes to not-for-profit advertising. The incentive to do social advertising, or pro bono campaigns is creativity. The imagination and inventiveness of the designers has hardly any limits. The industry can use its full potential to create powerful pieces of communication. This type of work can also be highly rewarding, as there is a greater tolerance level by the consumer for advertising that has the goal to help individuals and society. The case studies have shown that the images can be provocative and confrontational, but undoubtedly highly effective and even appreciated.

The definition of shock advertising has shown its diversity is due to the ever evolving field of advertising in connection with the oversaturated world of advertising: the face of shock is changing. The industry is suggesting a move away from traditional shock advertising, which is having a major impact on the designer of tomorrow. Shock advertising has gone from confrontational imagery by Benetton or Calvin Klein to more rational and emotional advertising, for example current Diesel campaigns, Quit Victoria or the Cancer Council. As Thomas Grace (2010) suggested, this is due to the necessity to find a better way to connect with people. "They don't pay attention to shock advertising because it doesn't shock anymore." The consumer can filter advertising more effectively, which is also due to modern technology. "That is why we are going to more emotional advertising, because we are trying to make a genuine connection with people" (Grace, 2010). The emotional connection is what advertising is all about, O'Loughlin and Anastasiadis agree. They go so far as to call it a counter trend. Shock has been pushed beyond ethical boundaries, which has been part of the cause of desensitisation. This is additionally due to the oversaturation of the consumer with disturbing imagery and advertising. The consumer has detached him or herself from shock. To regain a connection with the consumer rational, traditional and emotional practices are being brought back into advertising.

The emotional connection and the integration of the consumer are developing into the next design practice. Reflected in several current not-for-profit campaigns, this has become important in design practice. This emotional connection and integration is based on an increased understanding of the audience's context, which will prevent the consumer from self-exempting or separating themselves from a campaign, which blocks communication between the campaign and consumer.

"We do think we [the advertising industry] have a sense of responsibility"  
(O'Loughlin, 2010).

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## Appendices

### Participant Information Sheet

TITLE OF PROJECT:

Shock advertising - Investigation of shock advertising and the system of self-regulation

At Curtin University of Technology, School of Design

My name is Christine Pflaumbaum. I am currently completing a piece of research for my PhD in Design at Curtin University of Technology.

I am investigating shock advertising and its issues surrounding perception of profit and not-for-profit organisation and the system of self-regulation trying to identify gaps and discrepancies. This study intends to closely look at the advertiser's point of view.

I am interested in finding out the point of view of the advertiser towards shock advertising. Why this type of advertising is popular and how effective they are from your point of view. I want to find out more about the advertiser client relationship, who makes the ultimate decisions? Questions will include the point of view towards not-for-profit and profit organisation and the system of self-regulation. Does the system work? Is it efficient from your perspective and what is the difference to the consumer's perspective? Are there gaps and discrepancies and if so, do they need to be closed? I might show some examples of shock advertisement and these can be very provocative, confronting and cause discomfort. However these will be images from campaigns published and accessible in the public domain.

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There is a possibility, depending on the development of the interview that I might ask for a shorter follow-up interview. It might be sufficient to answer a couple of questions via email or telephone.

The interview process will take approximately 1 hour.

Your involvement in this research is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any stage without it affecting your right or my responsibilities. When you have signed the consent form I will assume that you have agreed to participate and allow me to use your data in this research.

Personal information you provide will be kept confidential. Personal Information regarding your professional background might be used if necessary in relation to the data you provided. In adherence to University policy, the interview recordings and transcribed information will be kept in a locked cabinet for five years.

This research has been reviewed and given approval by Curtin University of Technology Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval Number: HR 159/2009). If you would like further information about the study, please feel free to contact me by email [cpf@pptrading.de](mailto:cpf@pptrading.de). Alternatively, you can contact my supervisor Suzette Worden on [s.worden@curtin.edu.au](mailto:s.worden@curtin.edu.au) or co-supervisor Jacque Shaw on [j.shaw@curtin.edu.au](mailto:j.shaw@curtin.edu.au).

Thank you very much for your participation in my research. It is greatly appreciated.

## Questions for Interviewees

The following questions are a compilation of all questions. Each interviewee was asked the same questions regarding the background information, as well as the general questions about shock advertising, to allow easy comparability. However, then questions varied according to the expertise of the interviewee. The interviewee was also allowed to direct parts of the following questions by describing experiences, which was especially important for questions regarding self-regulation.

### A. Industry

Questions were adjusted depending on the interviewee and their expertise. This is an overview of all questions of interest.

#### **Background information about interviewee:**

How long do you work in the advertising industry?

How long have you been working for....?

What kind of projects are you working on currently?

What is your role in the advertisements?

#### **Questions about shock advertising:**

How would you define shock advertising?

Does shock still exist, or have we seen it all?

Are consumers desensitized?

What is your personal view to shock advertising? How have you experienced it?

Do you know current examples of shock advertising? Why are these shocking?

When does shock advertising make sense?

(Doubts over effectiveness, especially social advertising)

What do you think of the concept shock advertising as a marketing strategy?

How would you define effectiveness in relation to shock advertising?

Have you used shock communication as a strategy for a campaign? Is shock communication a strategy?

Does advertising have to be more shocking and provocative to gain attention with the consumer today?

How important are morals and ethics in relation to shock advertising, or advertising in general? Where do they come into play? Do they regulate how far certain topics/ads can be pushed?

Ethics, demographics and placement play an important role in advertising. How do you consider these issues? What is the process like? Placement part of shock?

### **Questions about system of self-regulation**

How effective is the system of self-regulation in your opinion?

Is the ASB a toothless tiger?

What role does the consumer have in the regulation of advertising? Do they have the power to force changes if they want to?

Where does shock advertising fit in the system of self-regulation?

How do governmental ads (drug ads, HIV...) fit in the picture of regulation as they are very provocative and graphic?

Is that a measure that needs to be taken in a desensitised society?

Do the means justify the measures?

Does the system of self-regulation also get exploited by people designing campaigns to be untruthful or bad taste as they will gain publicity?

Bad publicity is good publicity?

How effective is the system of self-regulation in your opinion?

Difference between the theory, facts and actual implementation of self-regulation. The system seems to be working according to the advertising agencies, however, facts, numbers show something different and raise questions. What do you think?

Is the ASB a toothless tiger?

What do you think about the system being voluntary?

How do you handle complaints by the consumers?

Have you had any problems, the need to pull ads or change ads?

Does it matter who complains (target audience or not)?

What role does the consumer have in the regulation of advertising? Do they have the power to force changes if they want to?

Is bad taste in advertising not so important as truthfulness as it can be considered a reflection of society?

It seems that the complaints to the self-regulatory bodies (world wide) are fairly low, is there a reason for that?

Is the awareness too low and a reason why people do not complain?

Have people become desensitised towards advertising conventions?

Is the system of self-regulation working?

What would the alternative be?

Is there a lack of control, which enables shock advertising to spread and become even more shocking and provocative?

How do governmental ads fit in the picture of regulation as they are very provocative and graphic?

Is that a measure that needs to be taken in a desensitised society?

Do the means justify the measures?

Does the system of self-regulation also get exploited by people designing campaigns to be untruthful or bad taste as they will gain publicity?

Bad publicity is good publicity?

### **Observations (open-ended questions)**

There are two different categories (I have identified) of shock advertising, the profit orientated and the not for profit advertisements (selling or un-selling products). Are there differences on how far boundaries can be pushed? Are these two types of advertising considered differently, is there more leeway for one or the other in how far boundaries can be pushed?

Is shock advertising favoured by the indifference that has developed with the consumer? Advertising has to be more provocative and offensive to gain recognition or any attention at all by the consumer?

Trend towards more emotional advertising away from shock, provocative or graphic advertising?

Is there a specific target audience where shock advertising is effective, or are there topics where shock advertising is highly effective?

Can advertising change behaviour of the consumer?

How important is the context of shock advertising (brand, audience, demographics, placement...)? What effect does that have on the ads?

Is there such a thing as bad publicity or is any publicity good publicity?

Why does most of shock advertising relate to either fashion brands or to social (not-for-profit) brands? These seem to be the areas pushing boundaries the most.

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Social advertising is even able to push boundaries even further?

## B. Montana Meth (Sarah Ingram)

Does the project prove that advertising has the power to change behaviour and attitudes if it strikes the right way, or is shocking enough?

Is the acceptance of hard-hitting, graphic and realistic advertising rather positive when a health campaign is un-selling a product instead of a company selling clothes using the same techniques?

What was the marketing strategy behind the Montana Meth Project?

What was the research background on how far the boundary of what is acceptable can be pushed? Was there a need to draw a line, or was that not necessary?

Why was the internet not used as a medium?

Did you have trouble with self-regulatory bodies in the US before or after the launch, as the ads were very hard hitting?

### C. NAD (David Mallen):

#### **Background Questions:**

What is your role in the NAD?

How have you become Associate Director of the NAD? What is your professional background?

Why have you started at the NAD?

#### **Questions to Shock Advertising:**

How would you define shock advertising?

What is your personal view to shock advertising? How have you experienced it?

Do you know current examples of shock advertising?

There are two different types of shock advertising, the profit orientated and the not for profit advertisements (selling or un-selling products). Are these two types of advertising considered differently, is there more leeway for one or the other in how far boundaries can be pushed?

Is shock advertising favoured by the indifference that has developed through the oversaturated consumer? Does advertising have to be more provocative and offensive to gain recognition or any attention at all by the consumer?

#### **Questions to the system of self-regulation:**

How does the system of self-regulation work in the US?

How effective is the system of self-regulation?

How are the experts of the advertising review chosen? (who, how and why?)

Do I understand correctly that the NAD is mainly for the industry?

If so, where do consumers complain about advertising that is unacceptable to them?

What power does the consumer have in the complaint process?

NAD is only or mainly concerned about advertisements being truthful, accurate and foster public confidence. But who is concerned about bad taste in advertising?

Who takes care of those complaints?

Is there any regulation?

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Is bad taste in advertising not so important as truthfulness as it can be considered a reflection of society?

It seems that the complaints to the self-regulatory bodies (world wide) are fairly low, is there a reason for that?

Is the awareness too low and a reason why people do not complain?

Have people become desensitised towards advertising conventions?

Is the system of self-regulation working?

What would the alternative be?

Is there a lack of control, which enables shock advertising to spread and become even more shocking and provocative?

How do governmental ads fit in the picture of regulation as they are very provocative and graphic?

Is that a measure that needs to be taken in a desensitised society?

Do the means justify the measures?

Does the system of self-regulation also get exploited by people designing campaigns to be untruthful or of bad taste as they will gain publicity?

Bad publicity is good publicity?

What do you personally think of the system of self-regulation?

What should, or could be improved?

Would you say that the system has gaps in it?